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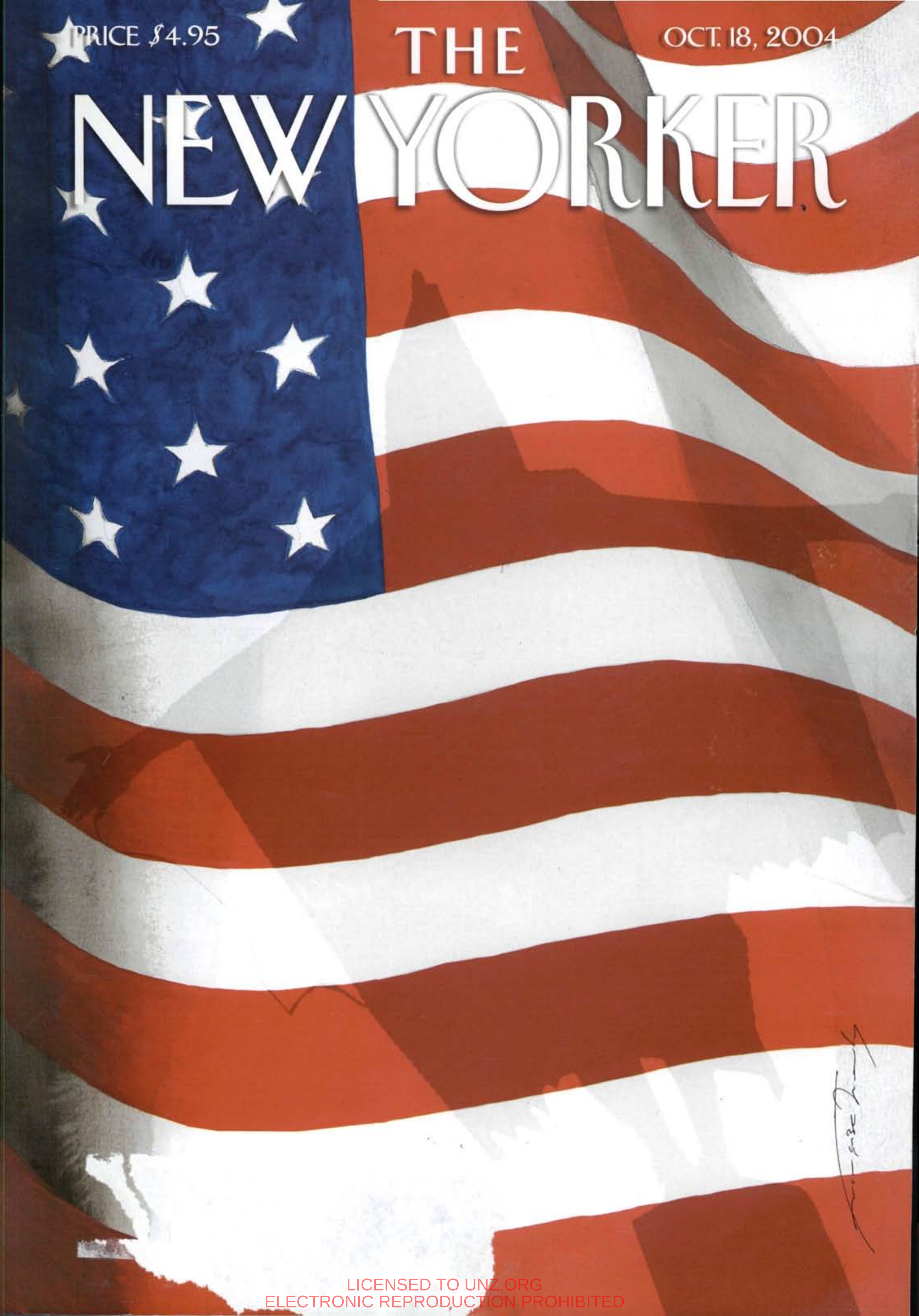
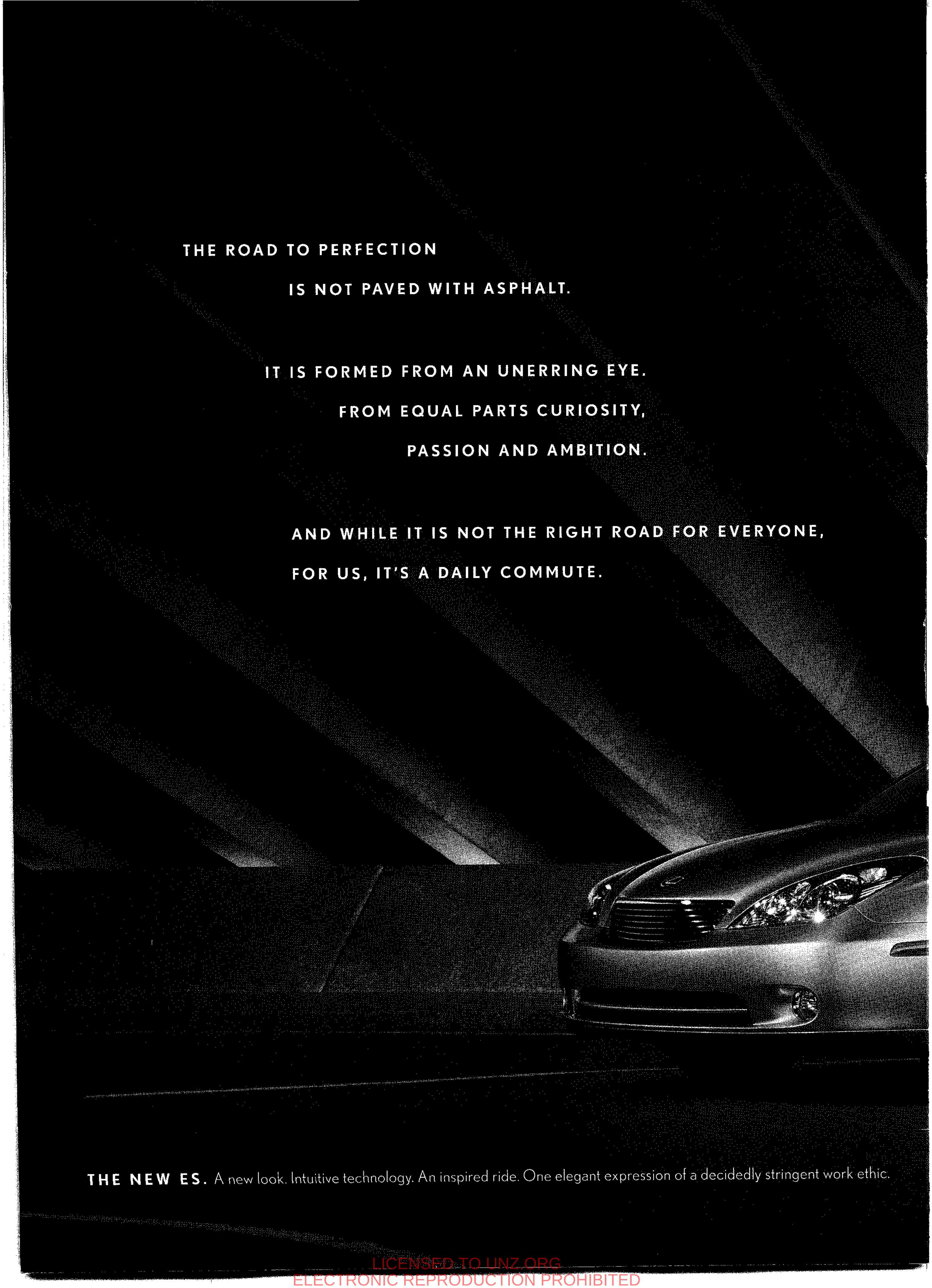
OCT. 18, 2004





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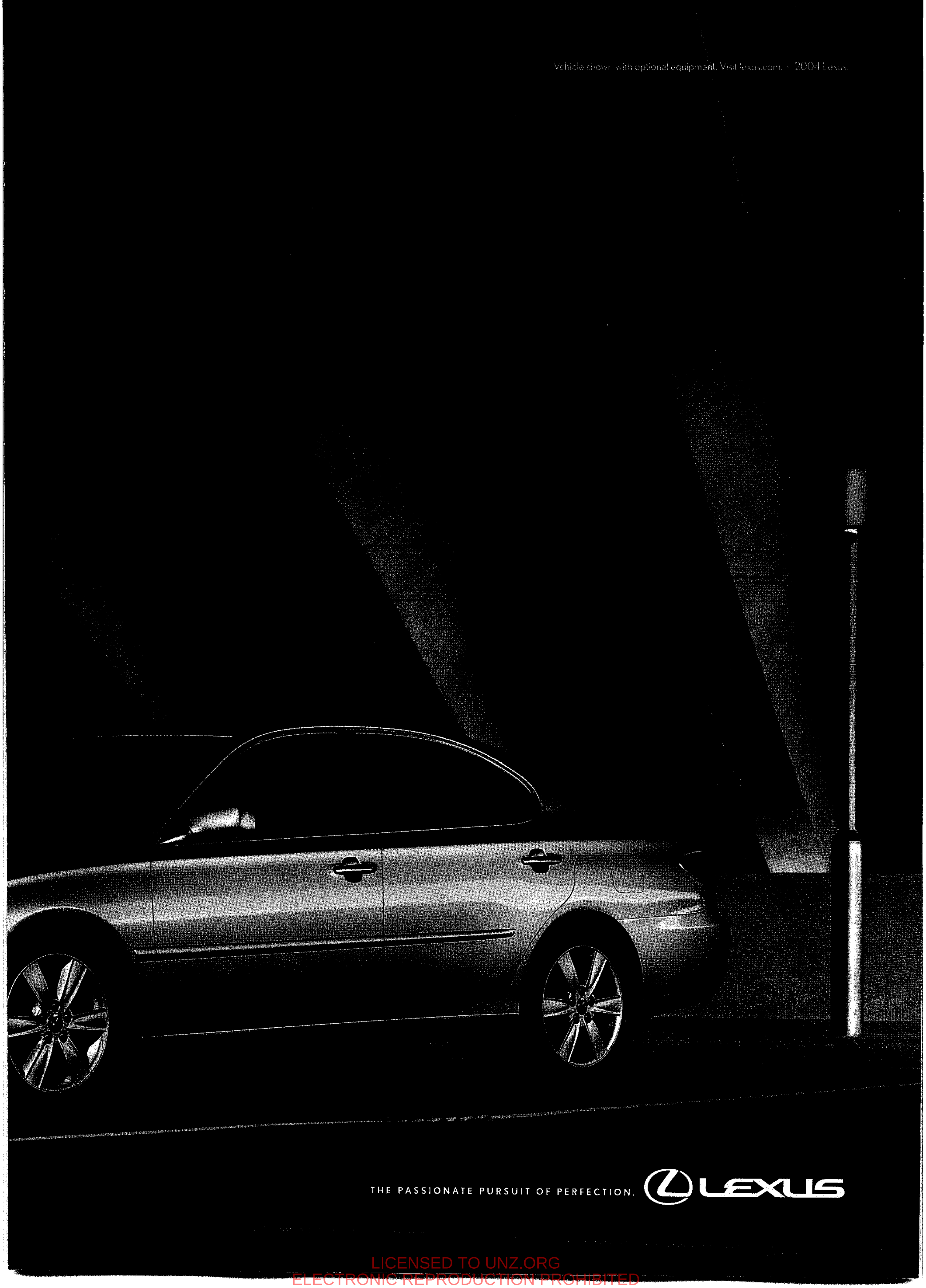
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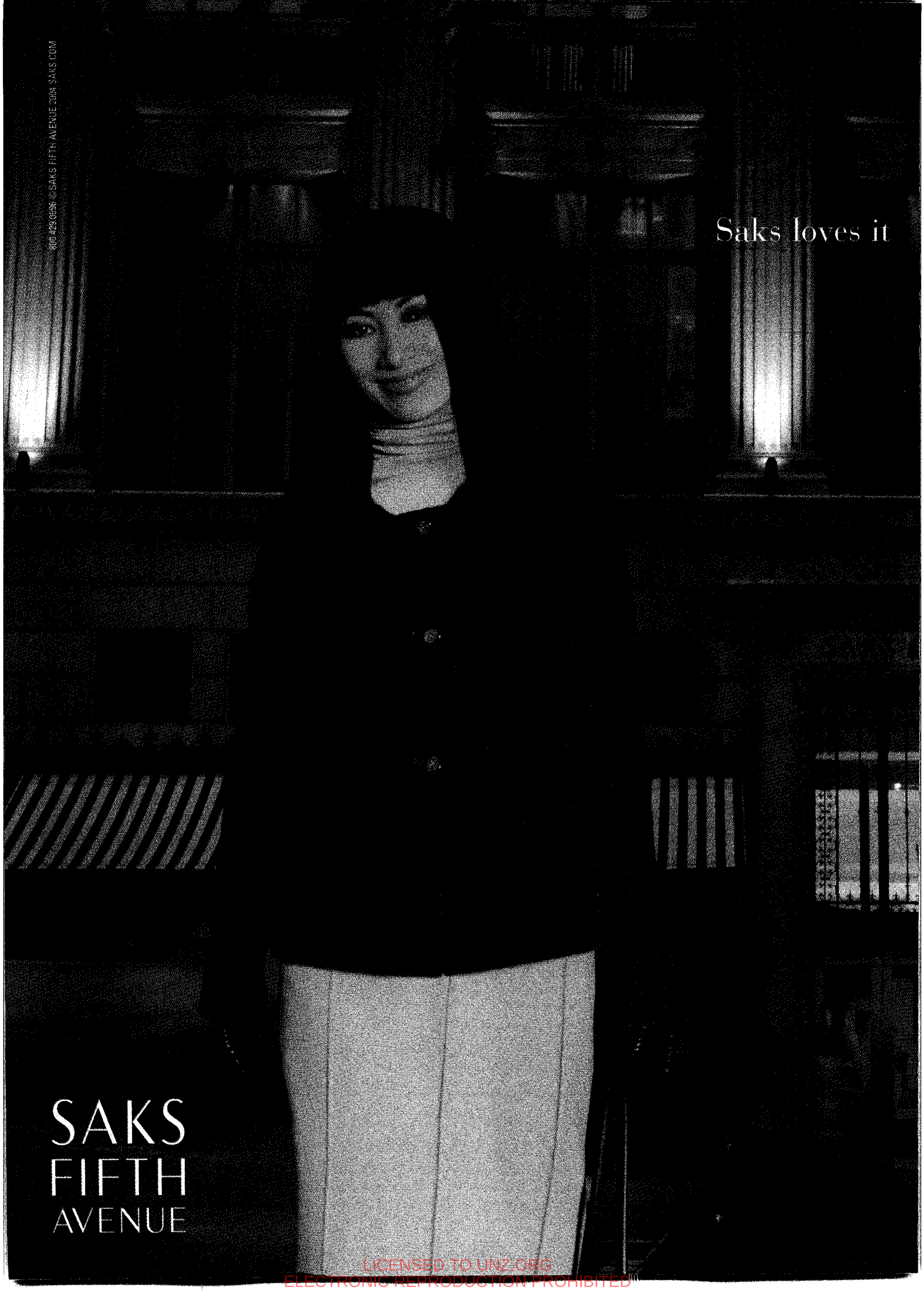
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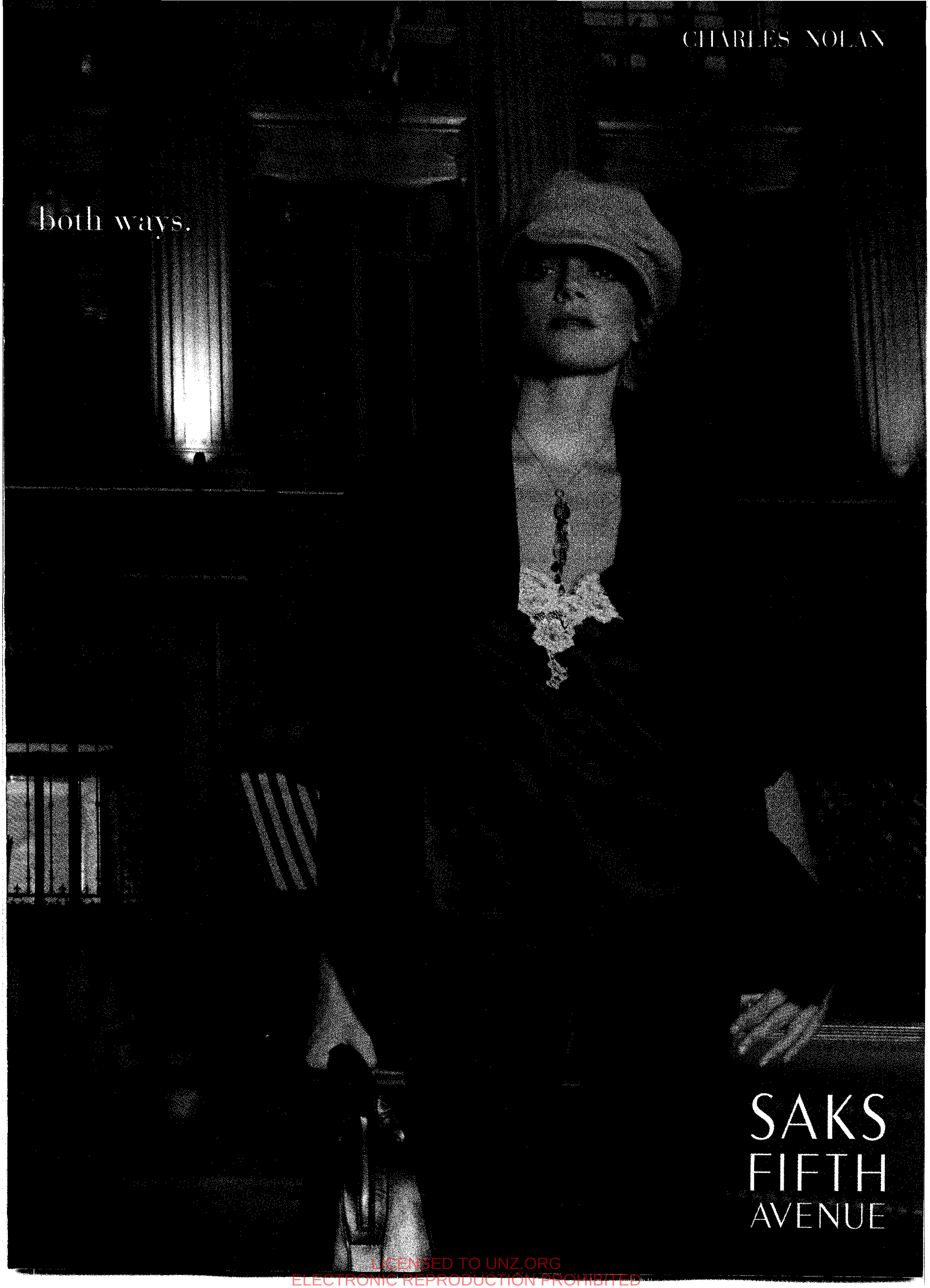
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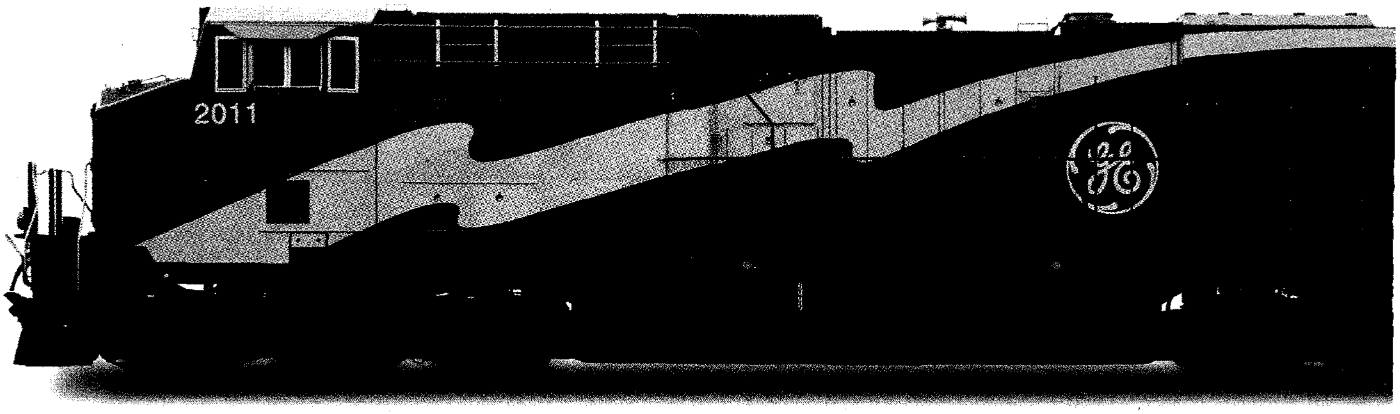

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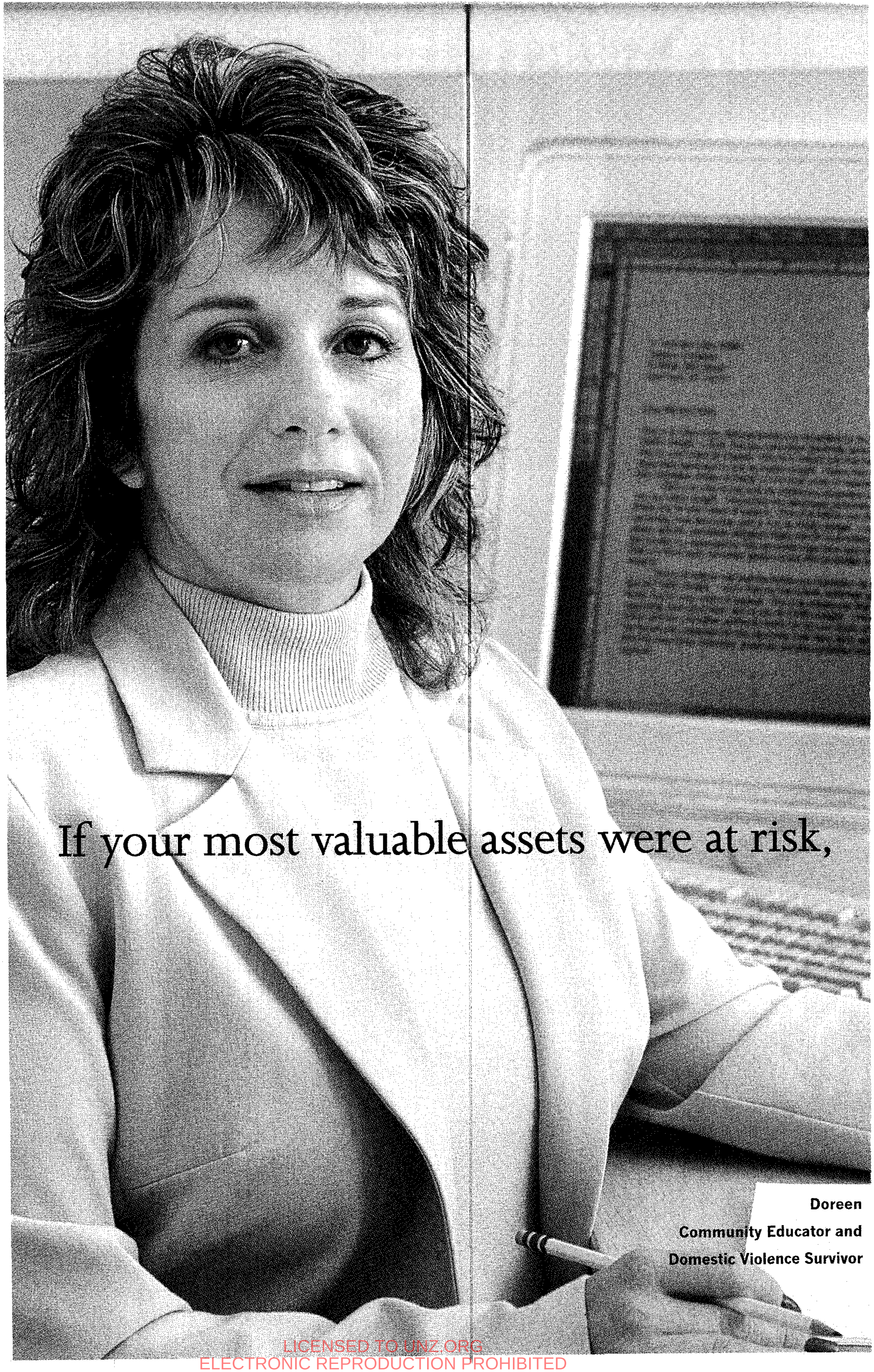
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Community Educator and
Domestic Violence Survivor

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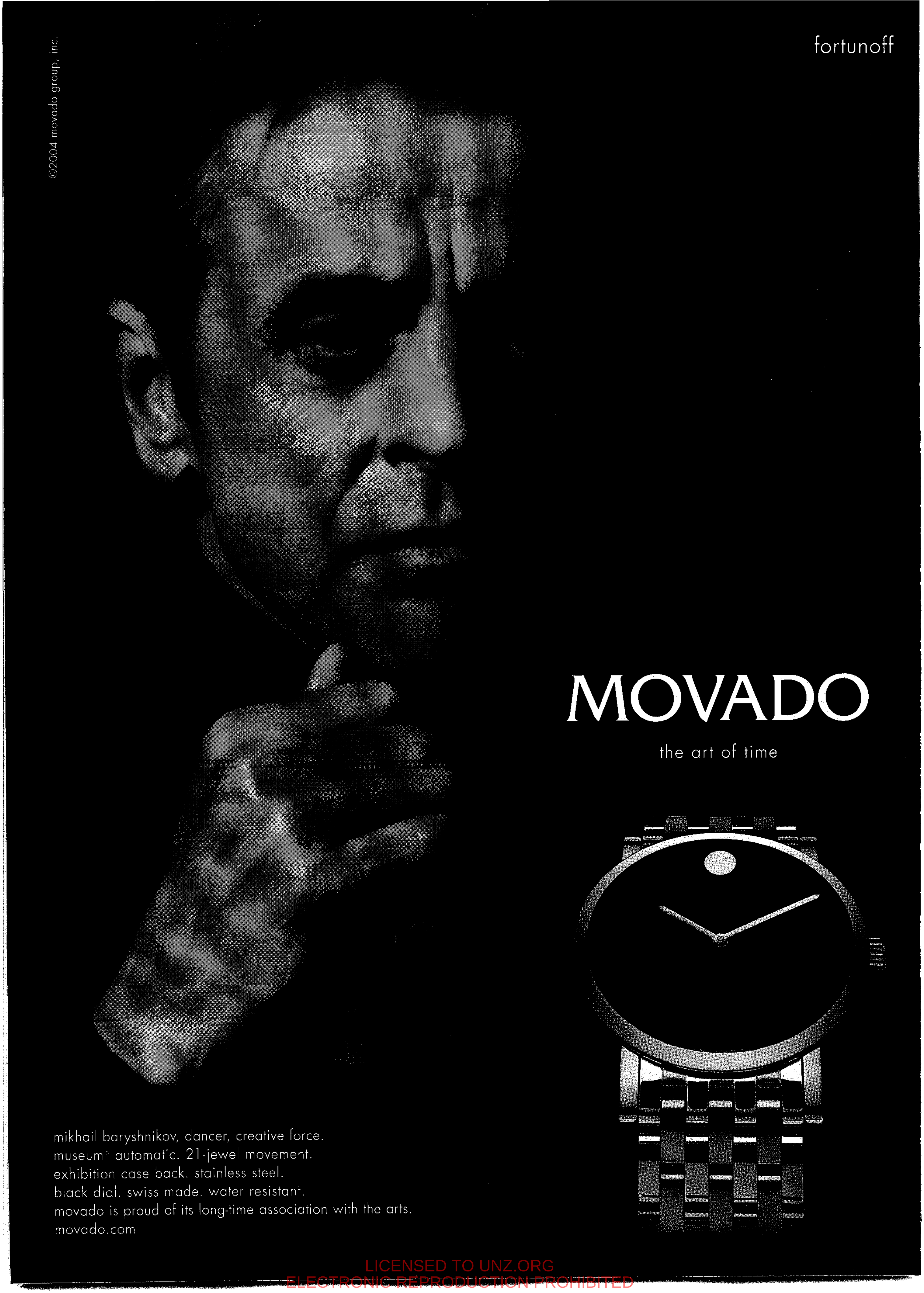
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THE NEW YORKER
THE POLITICS ISSUE

OCTOBER 18, 2004

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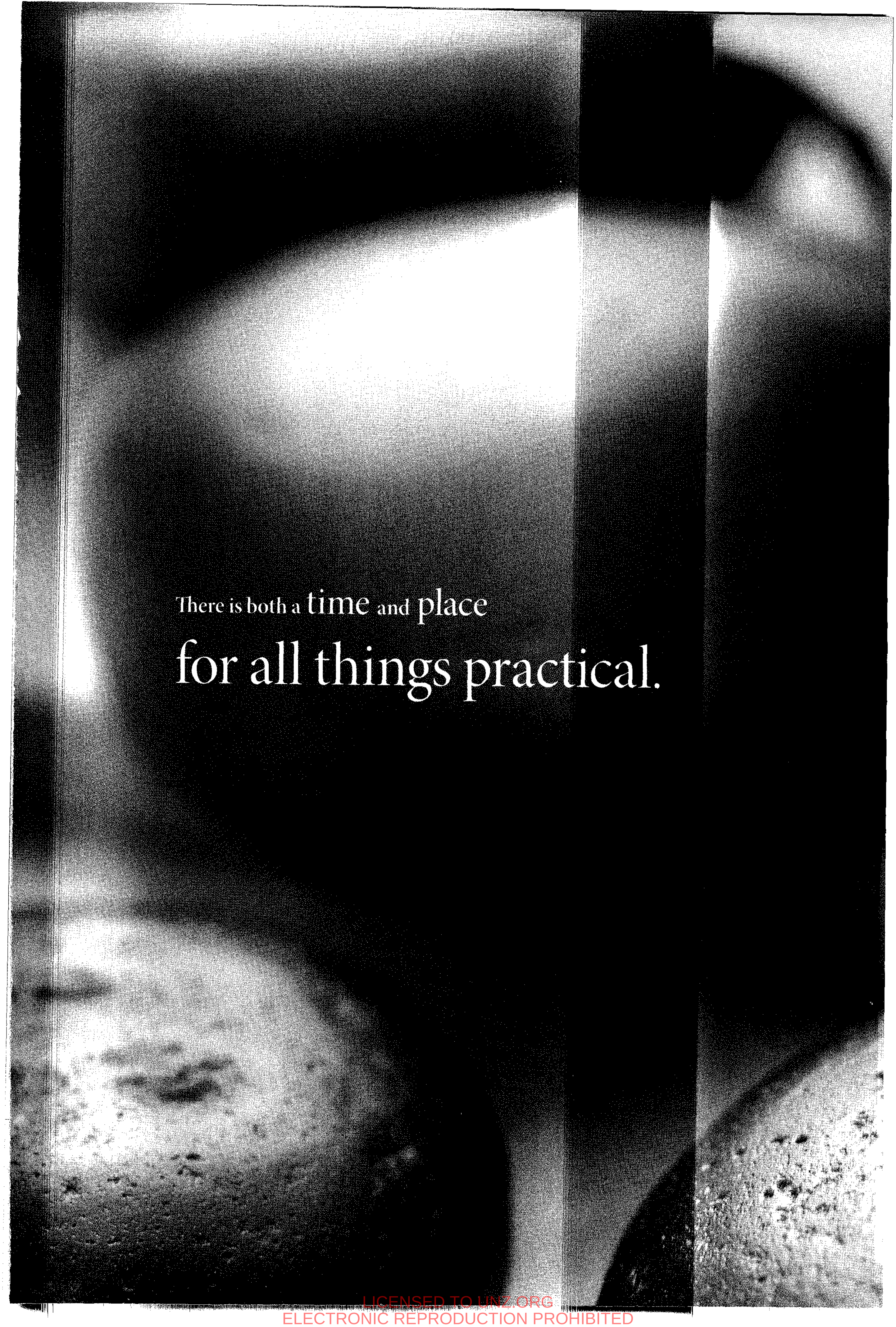
There is both a time and place
for all things practical.

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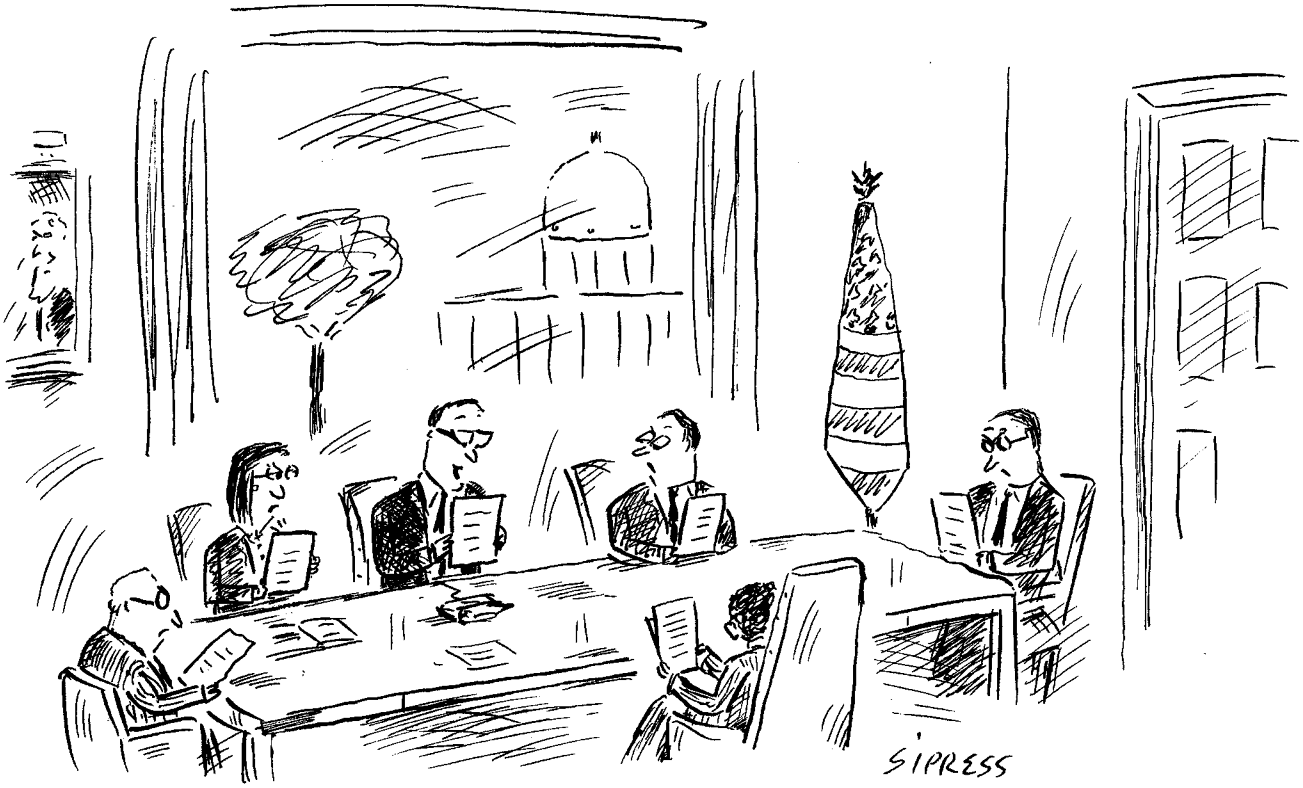
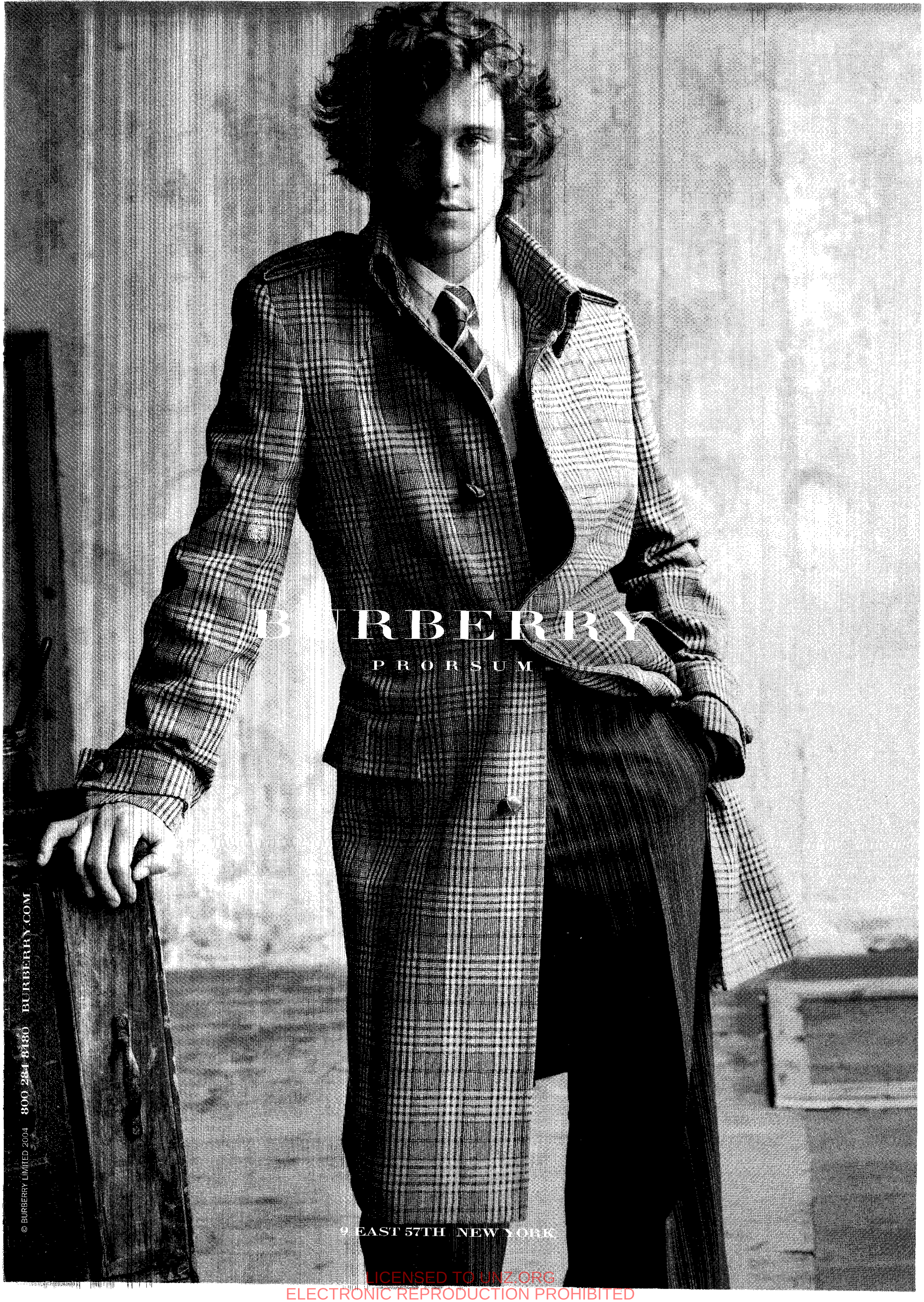


"Let's change 'brink of chaos' to 'Everything is wonderful.'"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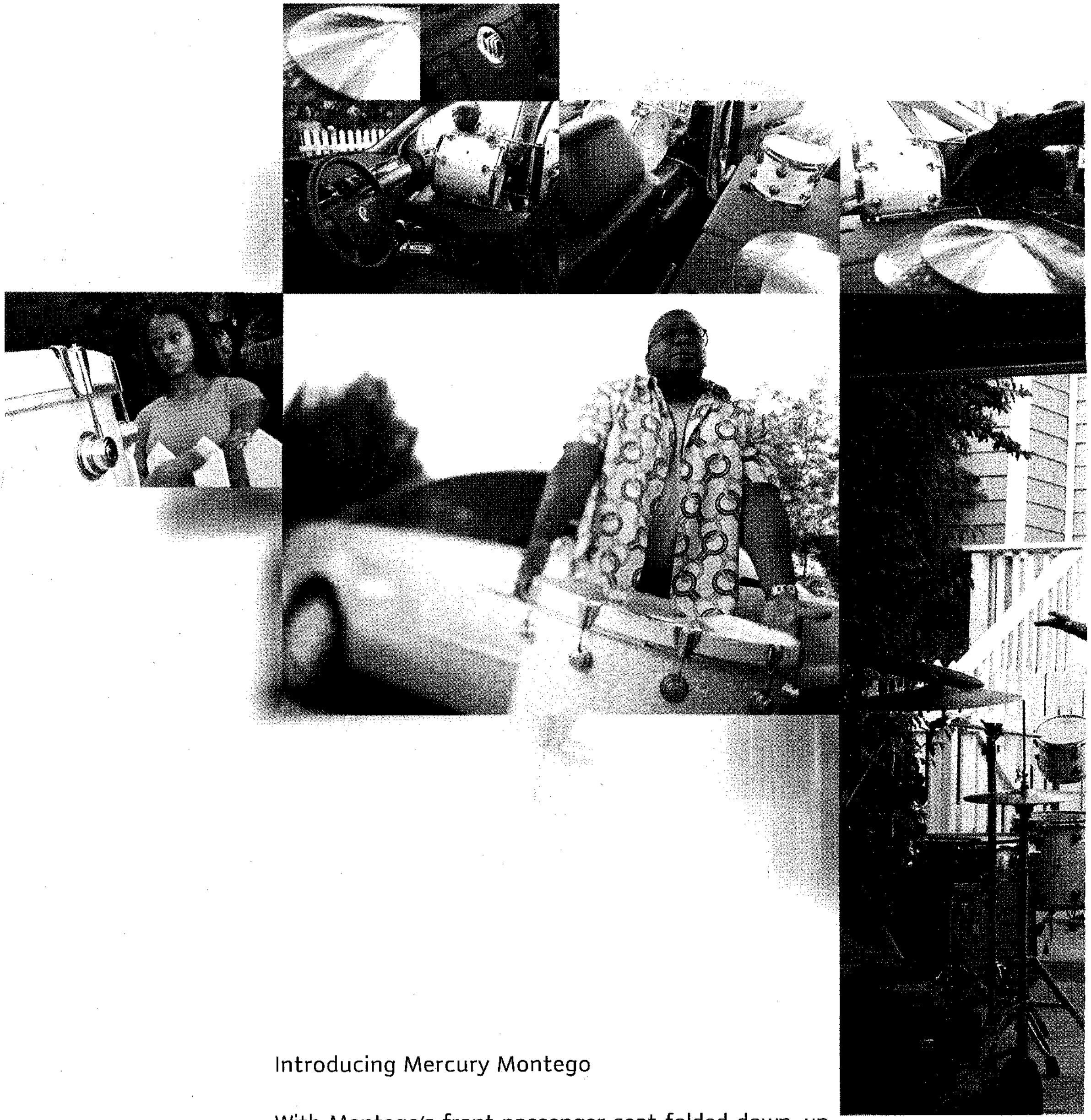

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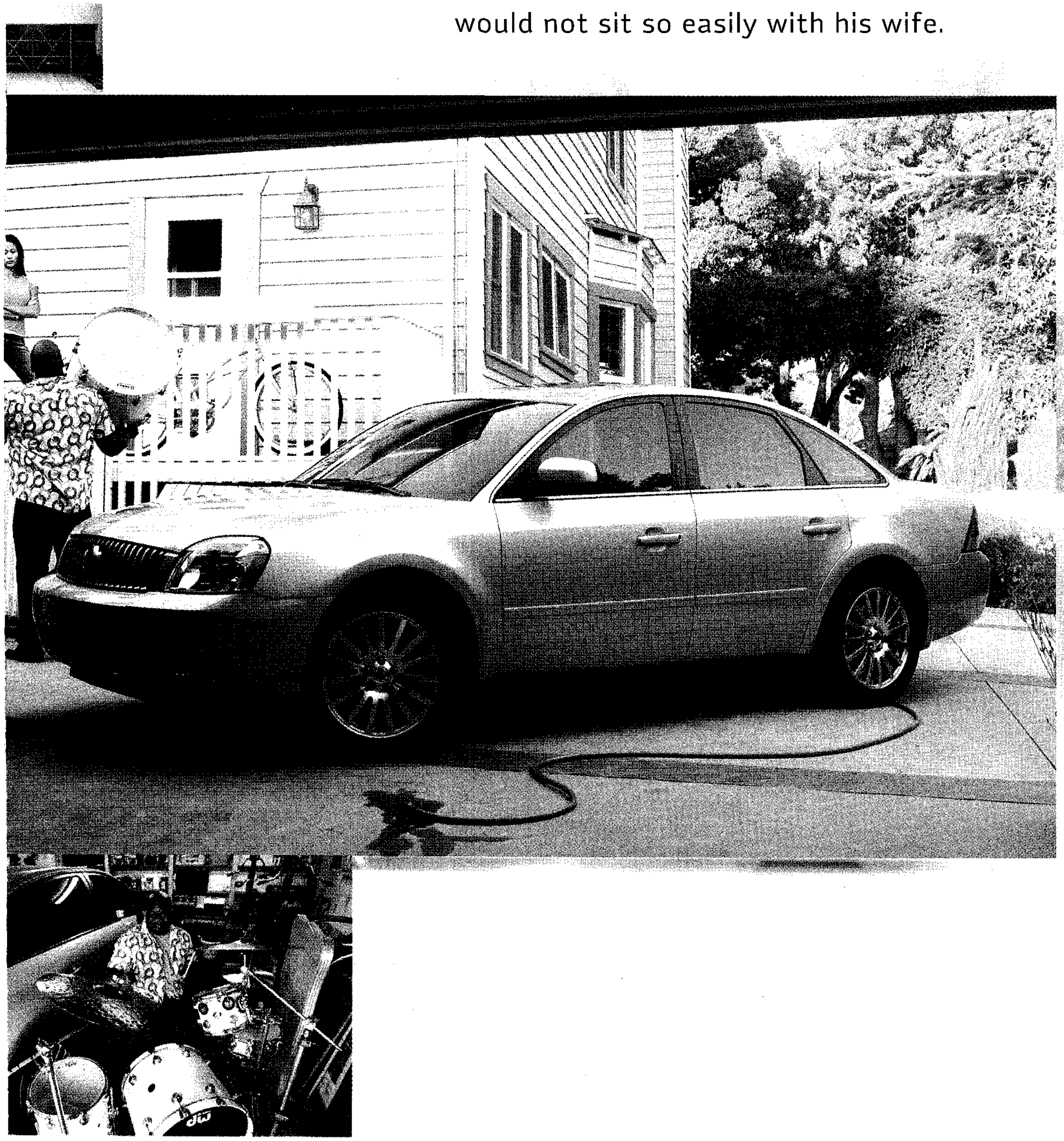

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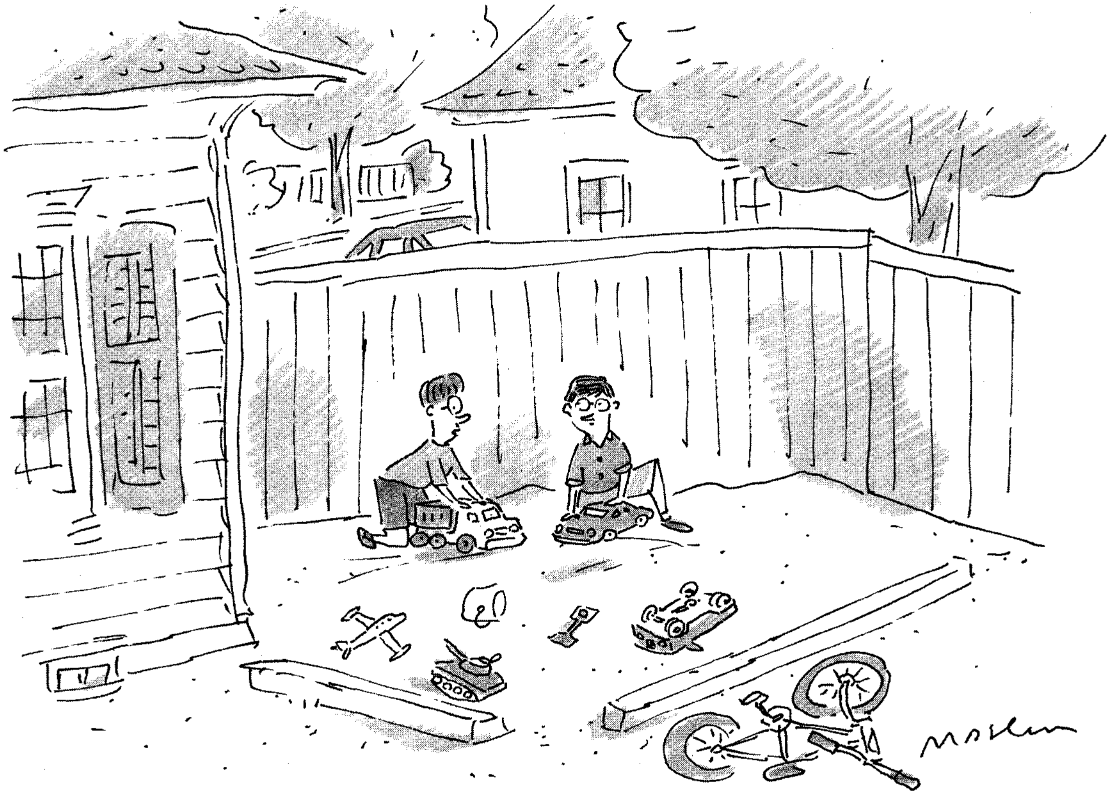

"When I grow up, I want to raise enough money to be President."

CHAPTER
— 3 —
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THE MAIL

RUNNING FOR FIRST LADY

Judith Thurman writes, in her Profile of Teresa Heinz Kerry, the wife of Senator John Kerry, that Heinz Kerry "champions the excluded and discounted women of the Third World" ("The Candidate's Wife," September 27th). What about the millions of women in Iraq and, especially, in Afghanistan, who had been utterly excluded and discounted but will soon be going to the polls to vote—thanks to the President whose policies Heinz Kerry and her husband have so condemned?

Curtis M. Laudenberger
Lancaster, Pa.

Thurman writes that she suspects that Heinz Kerry, with her cosmopolitan air and her references to "Kyoto," "the big Ag subsidies," and "the W.T.O.," is talking past many people out in America. I think that Thurman does not realize how many women are utterly taken with Heinz Kerry. We may not live in New York City or inside the Beltway, but we vote, and we are paying attention. And who the First Lady is does make a difference.

Kate Missett
Gillette, Wyoming

Thurman describes Teresa Heinz Kerry's outspokenness and commitment to her work as two of her most controversial qualities. I find them nothing but admirable. However, it is Heinz Kerry's compassion that I respect even more. Thirteen years ago, the plane crash that claimed the life of her husband and six others also left my brother severely injured. Just days later, when it still wasn't clear whether my brother would live or die, she called my family at home to express her wish that our tragedy would end differently from hers. She did not need to contact us; she had just lost her husband. She made the call as a person who wanted to reach out, not as a politician or as the politician's wife that she no longer was. It was a private act that must have been excruciating for her. I intend to vote for John Kerry based on his political stance, but were it enough to vote for a candidate based solely on his spouse, Senator Kerry would still have my vote, hands down.

Amy Rutenberg
New York City

Teresa Heinz Kerry appears to come much closer to Eleanor Roosevelt than to any other First Lady in modern memory, sharing an independence of spirit and a wide range of interests. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. . . . You must do the thing you think you cannot do." I think that Heinz Kerry could have said that. She is just as fearless as Eleanor Roosevelt and could be just as influential.

Lois Pidgeon
San Francisco, Calif.

I believe that one of the responsibilities of the First Lady is to serve as a role model for young American women and that both Laura Bush and Teresa Heinz Kerry should be considered in that light. Whom do we want our daughters to look up to? An automaton who gazes at her spouse, unblinking, unquestioning, "staying the course" no matter what? Or the woman who emerges in Thurman's Profile: an individual, an equal, a thinker and reader, someone with her own opinions? Are we looking for a mannequin or are we ready for Teresa?

Mary Ann Whipp
Clarkston, Mich.

CORRECTION: The "plausible villain" from "King Lear" referred to by Adam Gopnik in his essay on William Shakespeare should have been identified as Edmund, not Edgar (A Critic at Large, September 13th).

•

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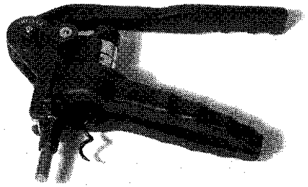
"The Rabbit is my 4th lever corkscrew—and the last one I'll have to buy!"
Bob Jula, Pittsburgh, Pa.



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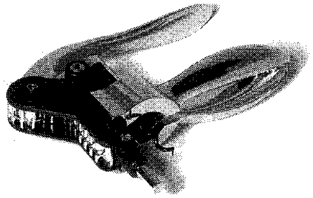

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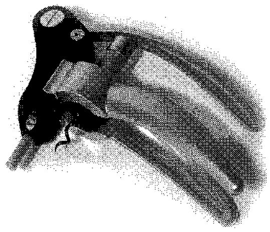

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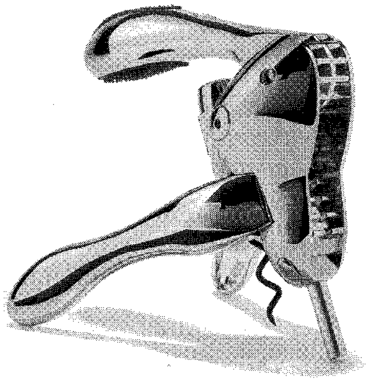

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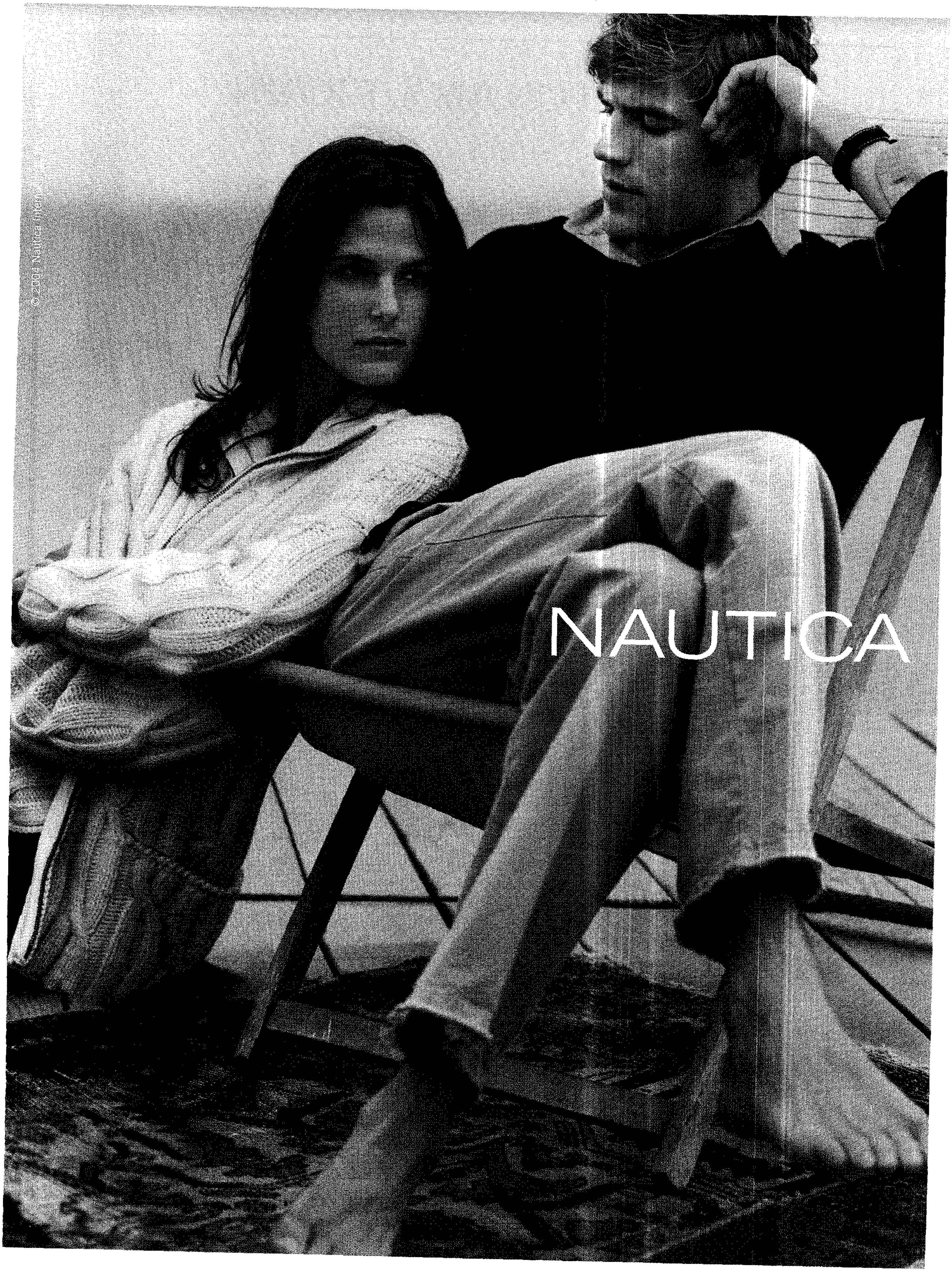

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

FACES OF A NATION

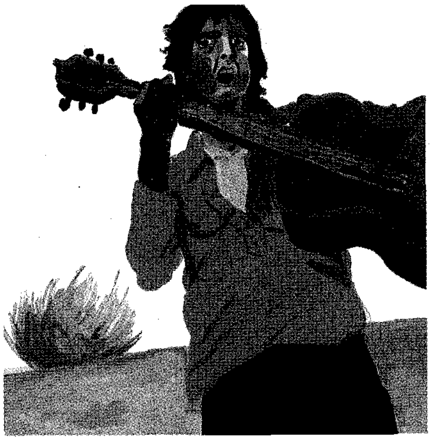
Gilbert Stuart painted all the nation's early diplomats, politicians, socialites, and generals, and a retrospective of his work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, opening Oct. 21, includes portraits of John and Abigail Adams, James Monroe, James and Dolley Madison (paired works that will be shown together for the first time in a century), and Thomas Jefferson. Fourteen of Stuart's iconic portraits of George Washington will be presented together in one room. A smaller, pendant show, "George Washington: Man, Myth, Monument," opens Oct. 19 and leads into the Stuart retrospective: it collects about four dozen paintings, sculptures, and drawings that focus on our nation's first President. (See Art.)

BACK FROM MEXICO

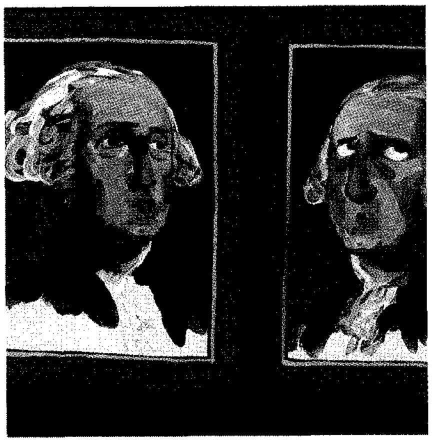
Stan Ridgway and his eighties rock band, Wall of Voodoo, had a hit with the spooky and mordant "Mexican Radio." Ridgway hasn't spent much time on the charts since, but he's kept making excellent music that ranges from the noirish to the outré. His most recent record, "Snakebite," finds him both pushing forward (songs like "That Big 5-0" investigate the tribulations of middle age) and looking backward—"Talkin' Wall of Voodoo Blues Pt. 1" is a hilariously straightforward account of his brief pop stardom. (Joe's Pub, Oct. 17; see Night Life.)

A REAL CORKER

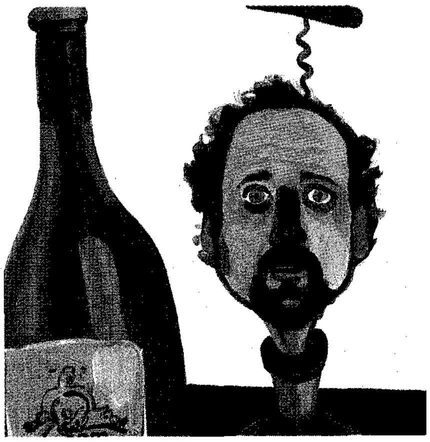
In "Sideways," the new comedy from Alexander Payne ("Election," "About Schmidt") that closes this year's New York Film Festival, Paul Giamatti and Thomas Haden Church play a pair of middle-aged near-failures—a writer and actor, respectively—who take a last-hurrah road trip through California wine country before Haden Church's character gets married. Their toxic bachelor party becomes a coed affair (thanks to Virginia Madsen and Sandra Oh) and, eventually, a spiritual fiasco. (Walter Reade Theatre, Oct. 17; see Movies.)



The rock singer-songwriter Stan Ridgway performs at Joe's Pub.

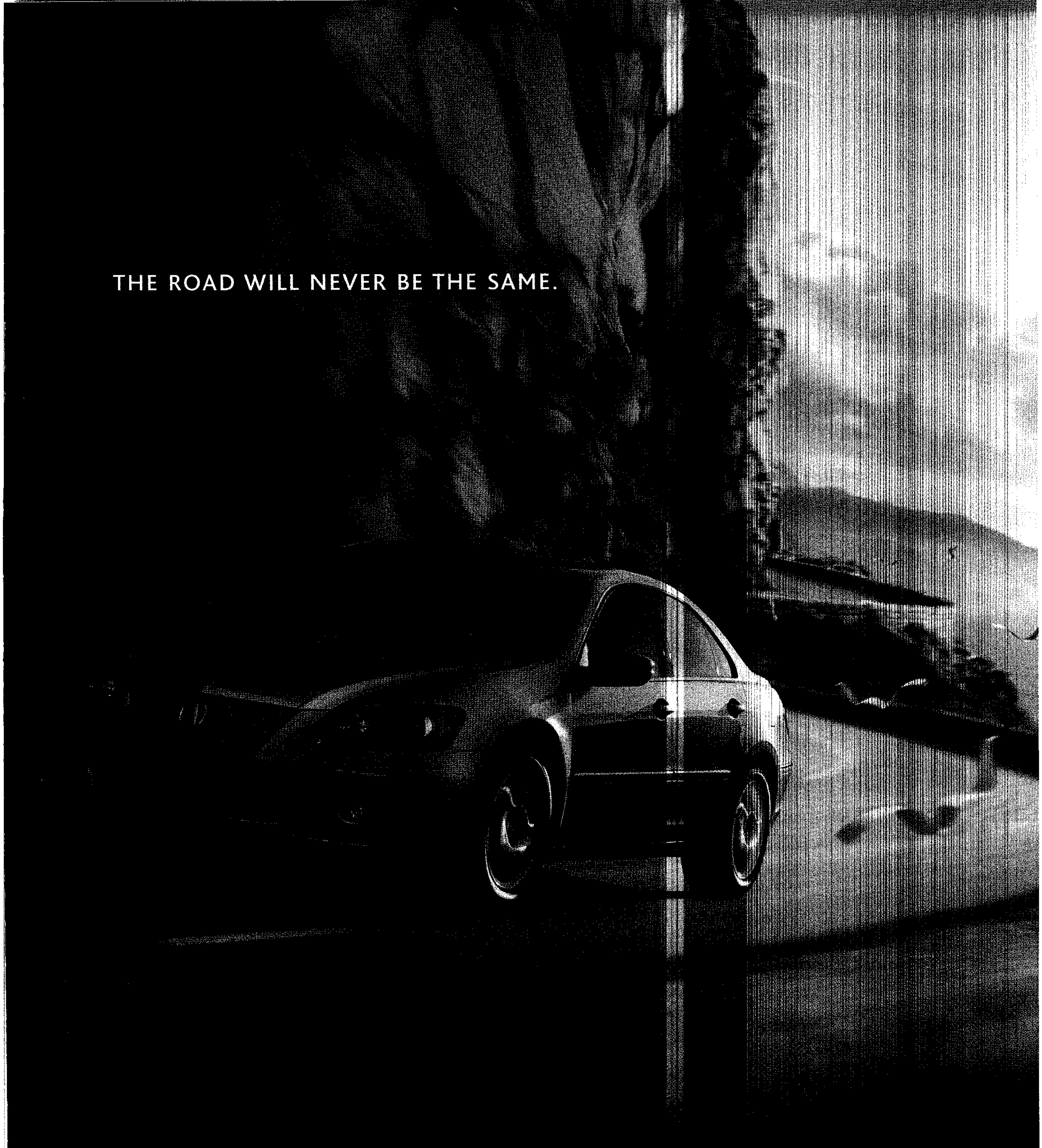


Portraits of the Founding Fathers, in the Gilbert Stuart retrospective at the Met.



Paul Giamatti stars in Alexander Payne's new movie, "Sideways."

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS



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Judith Ivey as Martha Mitchell in "Dirty Tricks," set in the Watergate era.

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
A young *Parisienne* named Brooklyn seeks fame and her long-lost father, in a new musical set in the heroine's namesake borough. Book, music, and lyrics by Mark Schoenfeld and Barri McPherson. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DIRTY TRICKS
A new play about Martha Mitchell (Judith Ivey), the outspoken wife of Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, who blabbed to the press during Watergate. Written by John Jeter and directed by Neil Patel. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

THE DYBBUK
This version of the Polish Jewish folktale, presented by Poland's TR Warszawa company, combines Szymon Ansky's 1920 romantic drama with Hanna Krall's contemporary story, about the unquiet soul of a boy who was killed in the Warsaw ghetto. Directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. Oct. 13-16 at 7:30. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

THE FOREIGNER
Matthew Broderick and Frances Sternhagen star in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Larry Shue's comedy about an unsociable Brit who goes on vacation in the American South and pretends he doesn't speak English. Directed by Scott Schwartz. Previews begin Oct. 15. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE IMMIGRANT
A new musical, with a book by Mark Harelik, lyrics by Sarah Knapp, and music by Steven M. Alper, tells the true story of a Russian Jewish immigrant named Haskell Harelik, who entered this country in 1909—through Galveston, Texas, not Ellis Island. Previews begin Oct. 19. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

JEWTOPIA
A comedy by Bryan Fogel and Sam Wolfson about a Gentile whose Jewish best friend teaches him how to get a Jewish wife. Directed by John Tillinger. In previews. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

RECKLESS
Manhattan Theatre Club and Second Stage present the Broadway première of Craig Lucas's 1983 play, about a woman who flees when she learns that her husband has taken out a hit on her. Starring Mary-Louise Parker and Rosie Perez. Directed by Mark Brokaw. In previews. Opens Oct. 14 at 6:45. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

SIN: A CARDINAL DEPOSED
A play by Michael Murphy examines the role that Cardinal Bernard F. Law played in the sexual-abuse scandals that rocked the Boston archdiocese, weaving together the Cardinal's deposition testimony and accounts from victims and their families. Directed by Carl Forsman. In previews. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE TEMPTATION OF ST. ANTHONY
Robert Wilson and Bernice Johnson Reagon (of Sweet Honey in the Rock) collaborate on a musical production inspired by Flaubert's novel, starring Carl Hancock Rux and Helga Davis, backed by a fourteen-member vocal ensemble. Opens Oct. 19 at 7:30. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

TRYING
A play by Joanna McClelland Glass based on the twilight years of Francis Biddle (Fritz Weaver), an F.D.R.-era attorney general and a judge at the Nuremberg trials, who has a battle of wills with the young secretary (Kati Brazda) his wife has hired to put his office in order. Directed by Sandy Shinner. Opens Oct. 13 at 6:30. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

TWELVE ANGRY MEN
Philip Bosco, Larry Bryggman, Boyd Gaines, and ten others appear in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Reginald Rose's fifties jury drama. Directed by Scott Ellis. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ACHARNIANS
Aristophanes' political satire about a citizen who tries to stop a war stars Amos Crawley and Liat Ron. Translated by Douglass Parker and directed by Gregory Simmons. (Theatre Three, 311 W. 43rd St., 3rd fl. 212-868-4444.)

THE BALD SOPRANO / THE LESSON
In Tina Howe's agile adaptation, Ionesco's "The Bald Soprano," inspired by a French-English conversation manual, becomes not merely absurd but uproarious. Two English couples meet in a bourgeois living room and make senseless small talk, interrupted frequently by a belligerent maid and a long-winded fireman. Michael Countryman and Jan Maxwell, as Mr. and Mrs. Smith, evoke a Monty Python parody of "Brief Encounter"; Seana Kofoed and Robert Stanton, as the benighted Martins, have a rare gift for physical comedy. Carl Forsman directs with an assured command of verbal high jinks and comic timing. The evening's second play, "The Lesson," is anticlimactic. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. Closes Oct. 17.)

EYES OF THE HEART
The National Asian-American Theatre Company presents a new drama by Catherine Filloux, about a Cambodian woman who suffers from psychosomatic blindness—a common condition among witnesses to Khmer Rouge atrocities. Directed by Kay Matschullat. (Intar 53, at 508 W. 53rd St. 212-244-0447.)

GOOD SAMARITANS
A rehab counselor (Rosemary Allen) and a patient (Kevin Hurley) strike up an unusual friendship, in a new play by the avant-garde writer, director, and composer Richard Maxwell. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through Oct. 24.)

HECUBA
The actress and acting teacher Kristin Linklater plays Priam's widow, and Heather Tom is her daughter Polyxena, in a new production of Euripides' tragedy, translated by William Arrowsmith. With an original score by Allison Leyton-Brown and Kaveh Nabatian, performed live. Directed by Alex Lippard. (45 Below, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 30.)

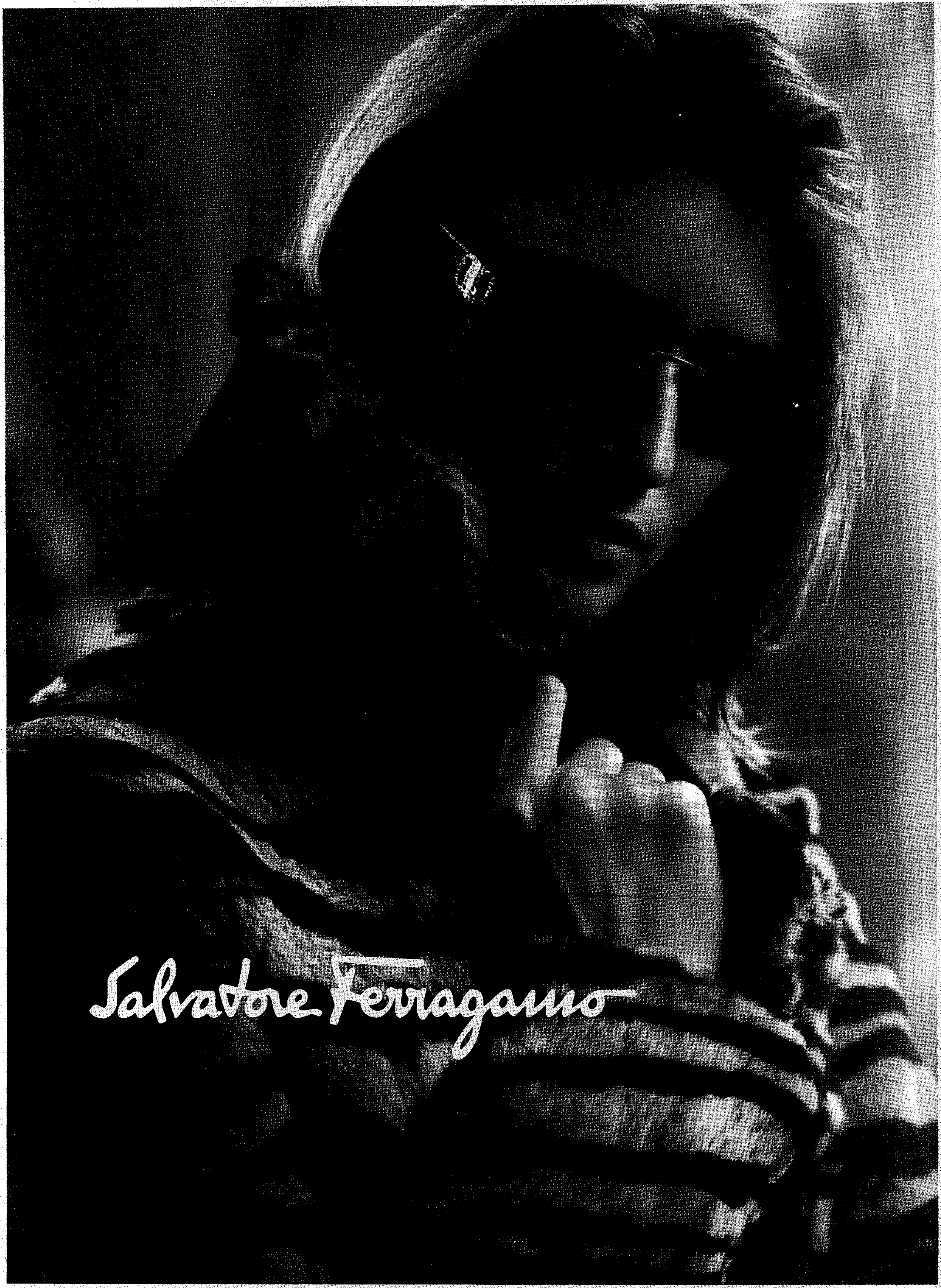
HEDDA GABLER
In Ivo van Hove's forceful update of the Ibsen play, Glenn Fitzgerald gives a charged performance as Eilert Lovborg, the brooding, self-destructive genius that Hedda Gabler (Elizabeth Marvel) desires, envies, and hates. Marvel's Gabler emphasizes her childish cruelty rather than her abstracted dreaminess: she dresses in a baby-doll negligee and has tantrums when her wishes are thwarted. Jason Butler Harner is funny as her oblivious, surrendered husband, George Tesman; Ana Reeder is touching as the limited Mrs. Elvsted, who loves Lovborg unselfishly; and John Douglas Thompson gives great breadth to the character of Judge Brack, whose designs on Hedda are made clearer in this production than in most. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Oct. 24.)

LAST EASTER
M.C.C. presents a new play by Bryony Lavery ("Frozen"), about three people who take a terminally ill friend to Texas and Lourdes in search of a cure. Directed by Doug Hughes. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH
Sigourney Weaver returns to the title role in the Flea's production of A. R. Gurney's play, in which a

JOSEF ASTOR

www.ferragamo.com

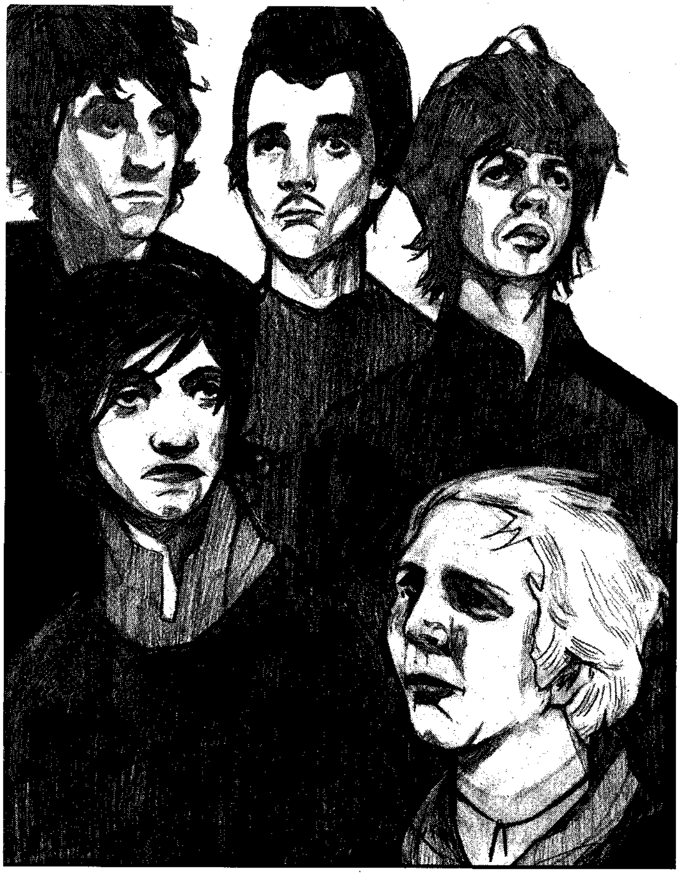


New York Fifth Avenue New York SoHo Americana Manhasset Beverly Hills Chicago Houston Galleria South Coast Plaza
Palm Beach Bal Harbour Shops San Francisco Las Vegas Forum Shops at Caesars Atlanta Lenox Square Santana Row
Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center Ala Moana Center Bahamas Vancouver

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Connecticut wife writes about her scandalous college love affair with the current President. Danny Burstein plays her writing coach, and Gerry Bamman plays Mr. Farnsworth. Directed by Jim Simpson. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

NINE PARTS OF DESIRE
A searing work written and performed by the playwright Heather Raffo. The daughter of an Iraqi-born father and an American mother, Raffo uses little more than a big black shawl to transform herself into a series of Iraqi women and girls whose lives she researched over the past eleven years. One is a child who unwittingly caused her father's death during Saddam Hussein's regime. Another is an obstetrician who has to cope with the country's recent epidemic of birth defects, including babies born with two heads and others born with no head at all. There's a whiskey-drinking expat in London who hates Saddam too much to march in anti-war protests. And, most memorably, there's a grief-stricken Baghdad woman known as Umm Gheda, "Mother of Gheda," whose family was evaporated by a "bunker buster" bomb in 1991. Their bodies were fused together, and outlines of their forms were left on the walls of the fallout shelter like cave paintings. Directed by Joanna Settle, on a versatile set by Antje Ellermann that uses plastic sheeting, mosaic floors, and a "river" with actual water to evoke multiple settings. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)



The Faint perform at Webster Hall (see Night Life).

NOBODY'S LUNCH
The Civilians theatre troupe presents a startling, funny, and disturbing view of what Americans hold to be self-evident these days. Exploring the questions "What do you know?" and "How do you know what you know?," the actors conducted interviews with a diverse bunch of Americans, including a very young Homeland Security policymaker, a gung-ho marketer, and a channeller of alien beings. The characters are brought to life by the protean cast, who expose both cultural difference and real lunacy without making judgments. Written and directed by Steven Cosson, with music by Michael Freedman. (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 10th St. 212-477-5288.)

THE OLDEST PROFESSION
The Signature Theatre Company's fall season is dedicated to the works of Paula Vogel. The first is this comic drama, set during the early days of the Reagan Administration, about five aging bawds who struggle with arthritis and a diminishing clientele. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

RICHARD III
Peter Dinklage plays the King in the Public's season opener. Directed by Peter DuBois. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through Oct. 24.)

ROSE RAGE
The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre performs an adaptation by Edward Hall and Roger Warren of Shakespeare's Henry VI trilogy. First developed and performed at England's Watermill Theatre, the production is set in a Victorian slaughterhouse. Throughout the play, a Greek chorus of masked butchers provides a dumb show of the abundant battles and beheadings—providing an effective contrast with the genteel, ruthless players. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Through Oct. 17.)

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
In this seriocomic spectacle by the Russian clown Slava Polunin, hobo clowns perform existential antics, culminating in a giant paper snowstorm that blows across the stage and onto the audience. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.)

SPATTER PATTERN
A screenwriter (Peter Frechette) gets involved in the troubles of a college professor (Darren Pettie) who's under investigation for murder, in a new play by Neal Bell, directed by Michael Greif. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

STRING OF PEARLS
The premise of Michele Lowe's new play at Primary Stages—that a woman could lose a pearl necklace and find it again thirty years later—seems clichéd, but the charm and nuance of the writing make the fable believable and fresh. The four-woman cast (Antoinette LaVecchia, Ellen McLaughlin, Mary Testa, and Sharon Washington) play almost thirty characters, each of whom comes into close contact with the necklace for a time. All of the actresses are terrific, but McLaughlin stands out for her range (a Midwestern housewife living in New York City, a Tunisian maid, a seventy-four-year-old woman having her first same-sex romance) and for her skill at accents. Eric Simonson directs. (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE
Berlioz's music accompanies the movement of inanimate objects through liquid in a thousand-gallon glass tank. Sheets blossom like blown roses; colored scraps of parachute material and spandex dart like pilot fish; tendrils of fringe spill and sway. The action, orchestrated by the master puppeteer Basil Twist, is created by five hardworking puppeteers in wetsuits. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

TRIPTYCH
Three women, played by Margaret Colin, Ally Sheedy, and Carrie Specksgoor, are connected by their love for one man, in a drama by Edna O'Brien, now at the Irish Repertory Theatre. Directed by David Jones. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

WHITE CHOCOLATE
A satirical play by the longtime *New Yorker* cartoonist William Hamilton. Directed by David Schweizer. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

WOMEN ON THE VERGE
Two middle-aged Irish groupies journey to Donegal to hear their handsome idol sing, in a comedy by the Irish playwright Marie Jones. Directed by Lynne Taylor Corbett. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 212-868-4444.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DRACULA, THE MUSICAL
Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

FINER NOBLE GASES
Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444. (Through Oct. 24.)

THE FROGS
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

GUANTÁNAMO: HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM
45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Oct. 31.)

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

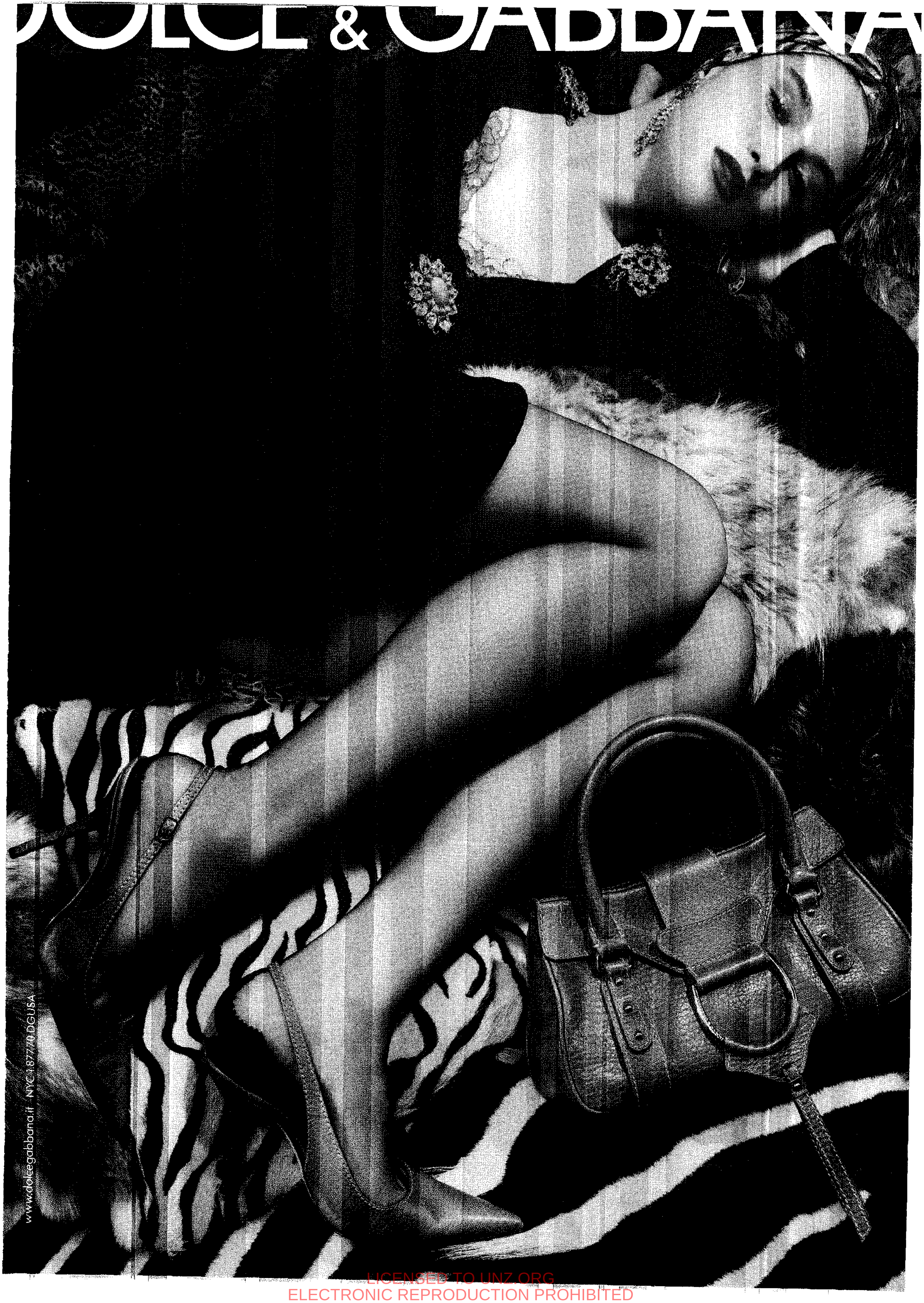
WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance features fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. The show has returned to the Shubert following a successful run this summer. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Oct. 12, Oct. 14-15, and Oct. 19 at 8; Oct. 13 and Oct. 16 at 2 and 8; and Oct. 17 at 3. Through Nov. 28.)

BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE
Best known for its appearance at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, this Australian troupe brings Aboriginal traditions into glossy, contemporary productions. The newest of these, "Bush," samples the imagery of indigenous creation myths, from praying-mantis stick spirits to slithering reptiles. Other sections are Aileyesque in their celebration

RACHEL DOMM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of female strength. The tribal elder Kathy Balngayngu Marika holds it all together as a stout yet ghostly mother spirit, and she counterweights some flimsier modern touches. Choreographed by Stephen Page and Frances Rings. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Oct. 19 at 7:30. Through Oct. 23.)

"DJANGO"
Ten dancers, including four guest artists from Dance Theatre of Harlem, join Henning Rübsam's Sensedance for an evening of new and repertory work, including the title piece, set to tunes by the legendary Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt; "Herman Sherman," an ensemble piece set to the jazz sounds of Woody Herman; and "Chorale," a piece for three couples—the women on point—set to an original score by Ricardo Llorca and performed live by the pianist Terrence Wilson. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 212-868-4444. Oct. 13-15 at 8, Oct. 16 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 17 at 3.)

"DEADMANDANCING EXCESS"
The choreographer and dancer Koosil-ja explores the human fascination with death in a provocative evening-length dance set to murder scenes in movies. Moving across a narrow catwalk, flanked by a wall of TV monitors that flicker with violent film scenes, Koosil-ja uses elaborate props, a staircase, and her expressive body to reinterpret the deaths. A woman flees her killers on her knees; a panicked samurai runs in front of a wooden fence while his enemies' spears poke through the slats, seeking his flesh. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 212-375-0186. Oct. 14-17 and Oct. 19 at 9. Through Oct. 23.)

D.U.M.B.O. ART UNDER THE BRIDGE FESTIVAL
Many of the activities at this annual Brooklyn arts festival are loosely choreographic, from a live knitting event laden with metaphor to a "parade of concepts" featuring the local artist Tillamook Cheddar, who happens to be a Jack Russell terrier. But there's plenty of dance proper, with more than eighty dance companies and choreographers represented, featuring some three hundred dancers in free performances (see also Above and Beyond). (John Ryan Theatre, at White Wave Performance and Rehearsal Space, 25 Jay St. 718-855-8822. Oct. 15-17. For a complete dance schedule, visit www.whitewavedance.com.)

"AMARAMÁLIA ABANDONO"
In its U.S. début, the Companhia Portuguesa de Bailado Contemporâneo pays tribute to the late, great fado singer Amália Rodrigues, admired for her gift for *saudade*, a kind of melancholic yearning that builds to catharsis. The choreographer Vasco Wellenkamp has channelled Rodrigues's vocal passion into virtuoso leaps and aggressive partnering. The dance vocabulary is broad: a couple will step out of a waltz hold and into a very modern lift. With original music by Carlos Zíngaro that provides interludes of relief from the teasing rhythms of the fado. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 12-15 at 8, Oct. 16 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

"PLAN B"
The Toulouse-based Compagnie 111 and Phil Soltanoff, of New York's Mad Dog troupe, have created a Magrittean dance-theatre piece in which four Velcro-suited dancers flout gravity, performing on a slanted plane that shifts from a forty-five-degree angle to a ninety-degree angle. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Oct. 13-15 at 7, Oct. 16 at 2 and 7, and Oct. 17 at 3.)

KITT JOHNSON: X-ACT
In "The Mirror," an evening-length solo, the Danish choreographer Johnson journeys through a maze of projected images. Some of Johnson's eerie contortions evoke the gymnastics of Cirque du Soleil, but she incorporates many other dance styles into her movement: modern dance, contact improvisation, Butoh, and martial arts. Part of Danspace Project's "Global Exchange" series. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Oct. 14-17 at 8:30.)

EVERETT DANCE THEATRE
The Providence-based company presents "Home Movies," an evening-length collage that brings together personal narrative, popular music, old Super-8 films, and five intentionally mismatched dancers, including a compact man who performs a loose-limbed hip-hop sequence and a tall, sinewy blond woman who dances a contemporary ballet solo. As desaturated film footage flickers on scrims, the performers relate their life histories in overlapping monologues: one is a Jew whose ancestors fled Poland; one is a Cambodian whose parents escaped Khmer Rouge internment camps; another is the son of an African-American painter. Most of the movement was improvised by the performers and edited by the artistic director, Dorothy Jungels, to illustrate, and sometimes challenge, the narrative. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Oct. 14-16 at 7:30.)

ISABEL GOTZKOWSKY AND FRIENDS
The German-born choreographer likes to set her dances to unusual music—submarine sounds that mingle with percussion, or a honking saxophone quartet that melts into exalted choral music. In its season at the Kitchen, her company presents a new work, "What Will Be," a quartet built on chance encounters, and revives two pieces from 2001: "Crossroads," a quick-moving, cerebral piece in which six dancers tease out shifting identities and alliances on a set dominated by door frames; and "In/side Out," an otherworldly piece, accompanied by Noah Khoshbin's video montage of overlapping hands, curls of smoke, and licks of flame and performed by seven dancers among surreal hanging tubes that suggest the Twin Towers. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Oct. 13-16 at 8.)

"DIVERGENCE"
Three companies, Circle of Dance Repertory Company, Orquidea Dance, and Sidra Bell Dance New York, join together in two evenings of dance at Williamsburg Art Nexus that showcase the work of six choreographers. The program includes new and repertory work, including the première "Triumph . . . a Tribute to Ray Charles," a solo performed by Kerville Jack, who evokes the spirit of the late singer. (205 N. 7th St. 718-599-7997. Oct. 15-16 at 8.)

"THE BENTFOOTES"
Kriota Willberg's Dura Mater company presents a jokey, faux-biographical dance-theatre work in progress about the history of an American dance dynasty. The performance interweaves dance, song, and mockumentary—including video guest appearances by Larry Goldhuber, Nina Helman, Lisa Kron, James Urbaniak, and Elizabeth Zimmer, among others. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery. 212-219-0736. Oct. 14 and Oct. 16 at 8.)

"SHUGACULUWATA"
An afternoon of Haitian dance and music from the choreographer Adia Tamar Whitaker and the Ase Dance Theatre Collective takes its title from slangy terms for "sugar," "color," and "water." Audience participation is encouraged in a child-friendly program that highlights the ties between Haitian culture and contemporary hip-hop. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Oct. 16 at 2.)

TABLES FOR TWO

FRANNY'S
295 Flatbush Ave., at Prospect Pl., Brooklyn (718-230-0221)—A pizzeria may seem like an unlikely place to be schooled in socially responsible consumerism, but the menu at Franny's offers a quick course in sustainable agriculture: milk (non-homogenized) from Evan's Farmhouse Creamery upstate, tomatoes from Bill Maxwell's Farm in New Jersey, pork from Iowa's organic Niman Ranch. The offerings are ever-changing, according to what appears at the market; recently there were crostini with a smear of garlicky chicken liver or piles of roasted cherry tomatoes, and pumpkin fritters, lightly battered and supremely fresh. The eggplant salad with ricotta achieved a melting creaminess, and wood-roasted octopus curled out of a heap of piquant olive-and-pistachio salsa.

"I'm just here for you, so take your time," a waitress assured a diner lingering over the menu one early-autumn night. Later, she brought out a sparkling red wine for an undecided guest to taste, saying, "If you don't like it, I won't be offended." The individually sized pizzas are cooked in a brick oven, hand-built by Gennaro Iadicicco, a third-generation oven artisan. When they arrived, flopping over the edges of the plates, the crust was thin and toothsome—as crisp as a cracker on the cheeseless clam-and-chili pizza, soft but still firm under the influence of the *quattro formaggi*. The chef has improved upon the traditional toppings, offering house-cured meats instead: *guanciale*, or pork cheek, is a thicker, richer cut of bacon, while pepperoni is easily trumped by the tender bite of fennel salami.

Franny's, which opened in April, has quickly become a neighborhood favorite. On weekday nights, its closely spaced tables fill with professional couples carrying briefcases and gym bags and Park Slope families training the palates of their young. On the weekend, waiting parties take cocktails to the back garden. Despite the easygoing atmosphere, there's no escaping the restaurant's principles (it sells sweatshop-free, eco-friendly T-shirts, and its takeout pizza boxes are made from recycled fibres). And then there's the aversion to waste. If you leave even a slender wedge of your salami pie, expect a waitress to ask, "You're sure you don't want to take that home?" (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Entrées $9-$15.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

LOVE WITH ARTHUR LEE / THE ZOMBIES
Fledgling bands still try to duplicate Love's mid-sixties formula of garage-punk drive, folk-rock jangle, and spacey lyricism. A true underground hero, Arthur Lee, Love's lead singer and creative genius, has done time in prison and been honored by the British Parliament. He reconvened his band a few years ago, much to the delight of his fans. The Zombies were a second-tier British Invasion outfit, but a few singles from their sixties heyday became radio staples, notably the haunting "She's Not There" and "Time of the Season." They also regrouped recently and have been lacing their sets with new material. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Oct. 13 at 8.)

CMJ MUSIC MARATHON
The annual carnival of independent music branches out into politics this year: the keynote speaker is Al Franken, not exactly someone who's known for his guitar fills. There's still plenty of music. Established performers will put on packed shows—Sonic Youth and Ted Leo are two of the biggest draws—and Canadian bands such as the Arcade Fire and the Hidden Cameras will do their shambolic, orchestral best to unseat the skinny-tied retro sound currently reigning on college radio. The one imperative for many festivalgoers is to discover new acts. For the full experience, wait till the wee hours, pick a messy-haired nineteen-year-old from, say, Brown, and follow him wherever he heads next. (For more information, visit www.cmj.com/marathon. Oct. 13-16.)

SOCIAL DISTORTION
This long-running Los Angeles band plays a gritty, rootsy take on punk rock that owes as much to Johnny Cash as it does to the Ramones. It took a hit in 2000, when its guitarist Dennis Danell died of a brain aneurysm, but the sneering vocalist and leader, Mike Ness, has assembled a new lineup and recorded a new album, "Sex, Love and Rock 'n' Roll." (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Oct. 14-15 at 7:30.)

"SOUNDS LIKE NOW"
A four-day festival of new music featuring more than a hundred musicians, including Thomas Buckner, Roscoe Mitchell, Pauline Oliveros, Jim O'Rourke, and Zeena Parkins. (La Mama Annex Theatre, 66 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Oct. 14-15 at 8 and Oct. 16-17 at 2 and 8.)

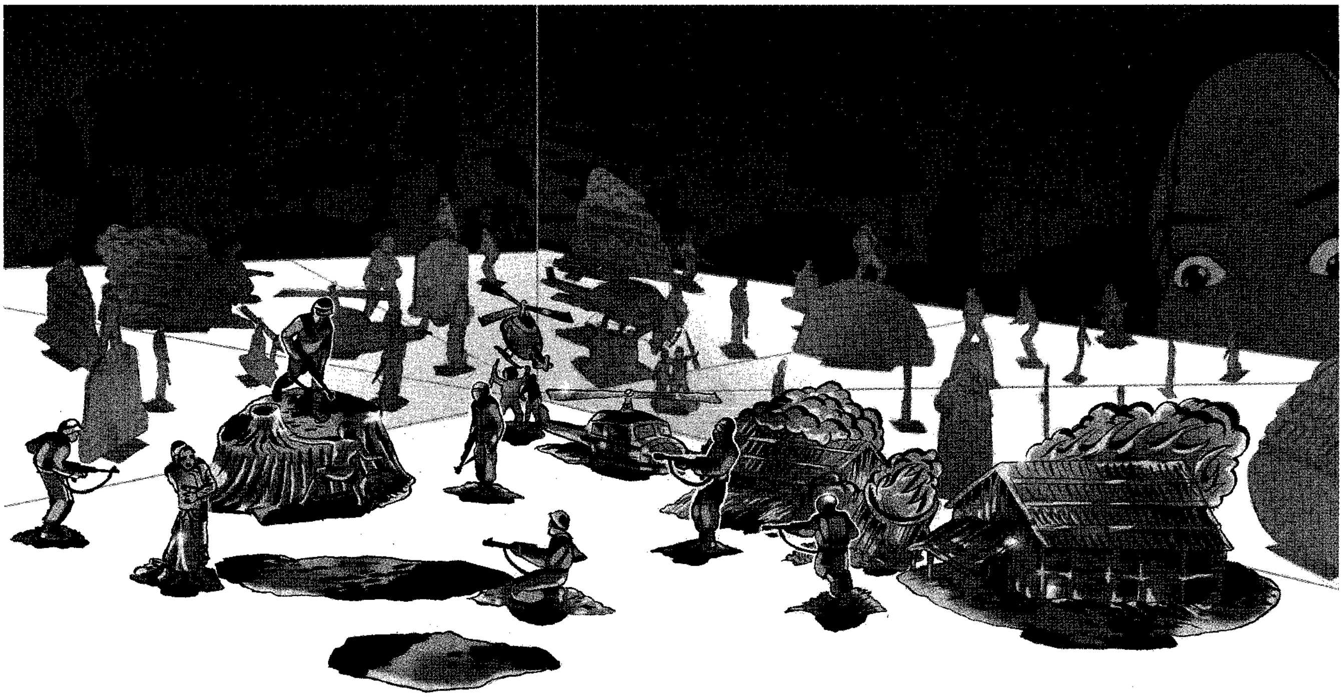
"SOUNDCHECK"
The lauded no-wave maverick **Arto Lindsay** brings his unique hybrid of Brazilian rhythm, experimental skronk rock, and sinewy pop uptown, as part of the Whitney Museum of American Art's ongoing music series. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676. Oct. 15 at 7.)

JOHN HOBAN
Hoban, who is well known in the west of Ireland as well as in Celtic-music circles, is a County Mayo native who sings, writes songs and poetry, and is handy with a fiddle, mando-cello, guitar, harmonica, bodhran, and banjo. (Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, 1 Washington Mews. 212-998-3950. Oct. 15 at 9.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 15 at 8: **Eva Ayllón,** a native of Lima, is fluent in Afro-Peruvian music and is one of her country's most popular singers. She's less well known here, but her first U.S. album, "Eva! Leyenda Peruana," and her current tour should help remedy that. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St.) Oct. 16 at 8:30: The Malian vocalist **Rokia Traoré.** (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) (For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

CABARET CONVENTION
The annual festival of song celebrates its fifteenth anniversary as Christine Ebersole, Maureen McGovern, Andrea Marcovicci, and many other big-name performers turn out for a week of shows devoted to the American songbook. Highlights include an eightieth-birthday tribute to Julie Wilson on Oct. 21 and a night of music by Bart ("Fly Me to the Moon") Howard on Oct. 22. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 888-468-7619. Oct. 18-22 at 6, Oct. 23 at 2, and Oct. 24 at 3. See also the Carlyle Hotel.)

SAM PHILLIPS
A decade ago, Phillips, an erstwhile top-selling Christian-music artist, wrapped her warm, dusky voice around a Beatle-esque collection of slightly psychedelic pop songs on the album "Martinis and Bikinis." It earned her a Grammy nomination, but her 1996 follow-up, "Omnipop," pushed the experimental envelope a bit too far. She rebounded nicely three years ago with "Fan Dance," a spare and cool collection produced, like all of her work, by her husband, T-Bone Burnett, that showcased her beautiful songwriting and put her voice at the center of the proceedings. Her latest is "A Boot and a Shoe," and it continues in the same vein. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 19 at 8:30.)



Chris Burden's painted tin figures depict "America's Darker Moments," in "Memorials of War," at the Whitney (see Art).

TOMER HANUKA

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

AVALON
660 Sixth Ave., at 20th St. (212-807-7780)—Oct. 14: **John Cale,** the Welsh avant-garde kingpin and Velvet Underground veteran, returns to New York for the first time in four years. His new album, "HoboSapiens," is an eclectic collection of up-to-date musical textures and effects. It has set critics aflutter, and it shows that the sixty-two-year-old has an ear for such contemporary musicians as Beck and the Beta Band.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Oct. 14: Arizona's **Gin Blossoms** crafted a couple of wistful radio-friendly hits before calling it a day in 1997. They re-formed three years ago, and are back on the road. Later that night, the rapper **Talib Kweli** takes over. Oct. 17: **Chang Cheng-Yue,** a modern-rock star in China. Oct. 18: The hip-hop group **Public Enemy** and the rock band **Living Colour** tore up the rule books for their respective genres. Public Enemy's outspoken agenda and furious sonic assault helped radicalize hip-hop. Vernon Reid's Living Colour rocked harder than the largely white heavy-metal community with a début album of uncompromising guitar pyrotechnics and hook-laden grooves.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 19: Los Angeles's **Ozomatli** has defied categorization for years, melding elements of hip-hop, salsa, dancehall, and funk into its music. The rollicking ten-piece multi-ethnic ensemble continues to mix it up with the addition of Middle Eastern rhythms and melodies.

GALAPAGOS
70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-782-5188)—Oct. 18: **Andy Friedman** is a visual artist and cartoonist (his work has appeared in these pages under the pseudonym Larry Hat) with a fondness for the acoustic-blues powerhouse Big Bill Broonzy, but instead of the slide guitar Friedman plays the slide projector. He displays his Polaroid pictures and pencil drawings and delivers lengthy, mostly extemporaneous monologues that connect the images to folk and blues standards. He'll be backed by a lounge trio for this show.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Oct. 16 at 12:30 A.M.: The **Twilight Singers,** led by Greg Dulli, of the late Cincinnati white-boy funk combo the Afghan Whigs. Oct. 16: The cheeky British vocalist **Jamie Cullum.** Oct. 17-18: The legendary **Cramps** have a ghoulish demeanor and a preoccupation with all things lurid, but they play hard-edged rockabilly and revere classic American rock-and-roll trash culture. Unsullied by artistic growth, the band is currently touring to promote an album of previously unreleased old songs, "How to Make a Monster." Oct. 19-20: The gritty Texan singer-songwriter **Robert Earl Keen.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Oct. 15-16: The standup comedian **Richard Lewis.** Oct. 17: **Stan Ridgway** (see This Week).

UNION POOL
484 Union Ave., at Meeker Ave., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-609-0484)—Oct. 16: For the past few years, the alternative-country label Bloodshot Records has staked out its presence during the CMJ festival with an afternoon barbecue. The bands play in a converted garage, and meat is grilled out back, drawing a surprising number of genuine Nashvillians. This year the label celebrates its tenth anniversary; the **Meat Purveyors, Dollar Store, Graham Parker, Bobby Bare, Jr.,** and the **Waco Brothers** are among those slated to perform.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Oct. 15: **Jimmy Eat World,** a group of Arizona boys who traffic in reflective post-punk. It sometimes gets them labelled "emo," but their major-league ambitions and pop veneer put them in a class all their own. They're touring behind a new album, "Futures."

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Oct. 15-16: The **Faint.** Three years ago, on its album "Danse Macabre," this Omaha fivesome used pounding drum machines, flat vocals, synthesizers, and a distinctly gothic perspective to push the New Wave sound of the eighties in a dark, hip-shaking direction. They've returned with "Wet from Birth," an album that smothers the impulse to dance beneath such heavy-handed production effects as a cloying string section. Fortunately, the lads will be their stripped-down selves here.

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JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Oct. 16: The singer **Sandy Stewart's** moment of glory was her 1963 hit recording of "My Coloring Book." Her son and accompanist, **Bill Charlap,** is currently experiencing his own place in the sun as a leading mainstream jazz pianist.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.** The Cabaret Convention presents late shows this week, including **Karen Akers** on Oct. 18, **Sylvia McNair** on Oct. 19, and **Klea Blackhurst** on Oct. 20.

CHARLIE O'S TIMES SQUARE
1611 Broadway, at 49th St. (212-246-1960)—Mondays and Tuesdays: **Vince Giordano** and his **Nighthawks Orchestra.** Manning the most unwieldy of instruments (bass, tuba, bass saxophone) as well as a bulbous vintage Kellogg microphone, Giordano leads a tuxedo-clad eleven-piece band whose ease with early jazz and swing breathes life into an overlooked era.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Oct. 23: They say that no one can put across a song as convincingly as its composer. **Cy Coleman,** the celebrated songsmith behind "Witchcraft" and the Broadway show "Sweet Charity," tests that theory as he fronts his jazz trio.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Oct. 17: **Billy Cobham,** the mightiest of all fusion drummers, spices up his Culture Mix Band with two old friends: the trumpeter **Randy Brecker** and the percussionist **Airto Moreira.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator Les Paul.

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through Oct. 16: The Brazilian-born pianist and vocalist **Eliane Elias** has a light-handed ease with tropical rhythms and phrasing, as well as with mainstream jazz.

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Oct. 15-16: The **Adam Rogers** quartet. Rogers is a versatile guitarist who has played with everyone from Norah Jones and Walter Becker to Chris Potter and David Krakauer, with his Klezmer Madness! band. He distinguishes himself by matching his prodigious chops with an active imagination, no small feat for a contemporary fretman.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The guitarist **Russell Malone** (here with his quartet Oct. 14-17) can be frisky and loquacious or silken and lyrical. Either way, the results are always bracing.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Oct. 15-16: The **David (Fathead) Newman** quartet. The tenor saxophonist Newman can roughhouse with the best of them (who couldn't after a decade in Ray Charles's peak-era band?), but he also brings a classical purity to ballads, caressing them with soulful swing.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Oct. 13: **Francesca Tanksley** is a compelling pianist and a veteran of the saxophonist Billy Harper's powerhouse quintet. Oct. 14-16: The Chilean vocalist **Claudia Acuña.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Oct. 17: **Eric Reed,** much like that other Wynton Marsalis-band alumnus Marcus Roberts, is a pianist with one eye always trained on the past. Here, his quintet reimagines the work of the New Orleans jazz patriarch Jelly Roll Morton. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

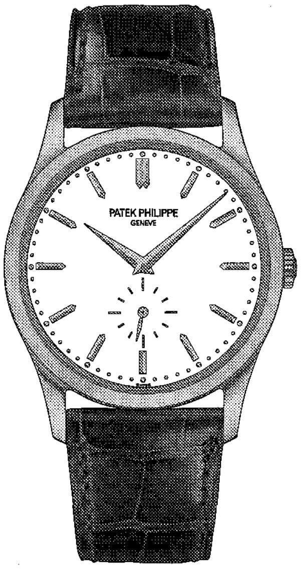
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"George Washington: Man, Myth, Monument."** Opens Oct. 19. ♦ **"Gilbert Stuart."** Opens Oct. 21. ♦ **"Romare Bearden at the Met."** Opens Oct. 19. ♦ **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** Through Jan. 23, 2005. ♦ **"The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830."** Through Dec. 12. ♦ **"Andy Goldsworthy on the Roof."** Through Oct. 31. ♦ **"Artists' Artists,"** a gathering of portraits of and by artists. Through Nov. 14. ♦ **"All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Art, Form, and Function of Gilt Bronze in the French Interior."** Through Feb. 20, 2005. ♦ **"Art Deco Paris."** Through Feb. 27, 2005. ♦ **"Hidden Jewels: Korean Art from the Mary Griggs Burke Collection."** Through Jan. 9, 2005. ♦ *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or New Objectivity—a style that flourished among avant-garde German painters between the wars—depicted a society in moral and economic free fall in ways that were in fact wildly subjective, pessimistic, and exuberant. In **"German Drawings and Prints from the Weimar Republic (1919-33),"** George Grosz, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and their contemporaries record a Berlin filled with demobbed and demoralized soldiers, rapacious industrialists, and femmes fatales. The nervous lines of their etchings, lithographs, and drawings evince an anguished comedy. Through Oct. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
The museum is closed until Nov. 20, when it will reopen in its renovated and expanded building at 11 West 53rd Street.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire,"** a vast exhibition of art and artifacts, opens Oct. 15. ♦ The Guggenheim has the largest collection of work by Vasily Kandinsky in the United States, and its curators have decided to devote one gallery to his work permanently. **"Kandinsky Gallery: An Inaugural Selection"** kicks things off. Through May 11, 2005. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"The Art of Romare Bearden,"** a centerpiece of this fall's citywide Bearden celebration, opens Oct. 14. ♦ In 1946, Jacob Lawrence won a Guggenheim Foundation grant to document his Second World War experiences. The **"War Series"**—fourteen small paintings in egg tempera on board—show servicemen crammed in their bunks, a trio of sailors mounting a gangway, prisoners behind barbed wire. Silvery musical notes filter from a foxhole, and a woman leans like a martyred saint over a fateful letter on a table. Lawrence's chiselled, architectonic figures and shiny washes of rust and ochre, olive drab and navy blue ennoble without dehumanizing. Through Jan. 31, 2005. ♦ **"Jennifer Pastor: The Perfect Ride."** Through Jan. 2, 2005. ♦ **"War! Protest in America, 1965-2004."** A program of documentary films screening daily. Through Oct. 24. ♦ The small, acute show **"Memorials of War"** achieves what a gallery scene dense with anti-war protests can't: a precise, moving group of pieces edited by curators with historical perspective. Vik Muniz's "memory rendering" of the famous photograph of a Vietnamese girl fleeing a napalm attack is juxtaposed with Jon Haddock's version of the same scene, from which the children have been erased. Several pieces address the weaknesses and limitations of conventional memorials. Robert Morris's "War Memorial" lithographs (1970) sketch out impossible plans, like a cross-shaped "Trench with Chlorine Gas," or a "1/2 Mile Concrete Star with Names." Edward Kienholz's "Non-War Memorial," from the same year, calls for making fifty thousand mannequins from surplus Army uniforms stuffed with clay and laying them out in a field. On a smaller scale, Chris Burden's painted tin figures depict "America's Darker Moments": scenes



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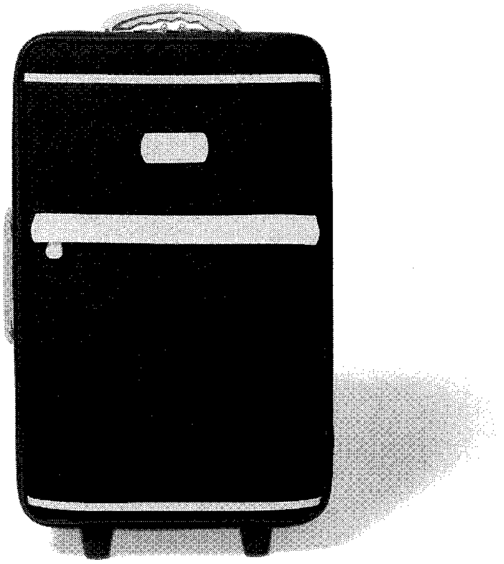

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from My Lai, Kent State, Hiroshima, Dallas, and Money, Mississippi, the town where Emmett Till was killed. Through Nov. 28. ♦ **"Pop/Concept: Highlights from the Permanent Collection."** Through Oct. 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler's **"Single Wide"** traffics in rural noir, mixing Gregory Crewdson-style images with crisp stock soundtrack noises (ticking clocks, dripping water, a barking dog) à la Janet Cardiff. The camera circles around and through a trailer home at night as a distraught woman drives a pickup truck into the kitchen, then emerges, bleeding, from the wreckage. The video loops continuously, making the wrecked trailer suddenly whole again and returning the undamaged pickup to its portentous revving in the yard. The nonlinear narrative film does not break new ground, but the nocturnal dreamscape is seductive. Through Oct. 22. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—The museum's vivarium again fills with hundreds of lepidoptera who have everything they need to survive—warmth, nectar, tour groups—in the butterfly conservatory. Through May 30, 2005. ♦ Another show of living specimens, **"Frogs: A Chorus of Colors"** presents some two hundred frogs in glass-walled habitats. Through Jan. 9. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Masterpieces of American Jewelry"** includes everything from sweet enamelled pansy pins mass-produced in Newark in the nineteen-thirties to galumphing masses of emeralds and diamonds favored by movie stars and socialites. Much of the work celebrates American pastimes or commemorates historical moments: a slender pocket watch (1910) shows Wilbur Wright flying by the Statue of Liberty with a low-lying Manhattan skyline in the background; an 1812 watercolor-on-ivory pin depicts a platoon of soldiers drilling. Other pieces are meant purely to impress, like the exquisite orchid brooches that Tiffany & Co. made for the 1889 World's Fair, in Paris; they would be perfectly lifelike but for the diamonds edging their enamelled petals. Through Jan. 23, 2005. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—**"The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2004"** is an online exhibition documenting more than two hundred and fifty television ads dating from the Eisenhower-Stevenson race to this year's Bush-Kerry contest. The exhibit can be seen online at livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us, or on the screens and monitors set up in the museum's café. (Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5; Fridays, noon to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-517-2742)—**"In the Realm of Gods and Kings: Arts of India"** presents more than two thousand years' worth of paintings, sculptures, objects and photographs. The works are loosely divided into two groups, those that relate to court life—royal portraits, scenes of princes at war and at play, embroidered silks, and carved stone decorative plaques—and those that relate to mythology. The exploits of the blue-bodied Krishna are predominant in the second grouping: a sixteenth-century carved ivory comb depicts him stealing butter, for instance, and a seventeenth-century manuscript page shows him romancing Radha, his favorite consort. Through Jan. 2, 2005. ♦ **"When Gold Blossoms: Indian Jewelry from the Susan L. Beningson Collection."** Through Jan. 23, 2005. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—The retrospective exhibition **"Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces."** In 1982, Denes planted a two-acre wheat field on a landfill two blocks from Wall Street; in 1998, she unleashed a flock of sheep to graze on the grounds of the American Academy in Rome. A man-made mountain on reclaimed land in Finland, planted with eleven thousand trees, was conceived as a "living time capsule." The photographs, drawings, and diagrams are interesting, even though many of the projects, like her proposal for the Irish Hunger Memorial, in Battery Park (which was awarded to Brian Tolle), exist only in documentary form. Through Nov. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—It would be a fun exercise to walk through **"Design ≠ Art: Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread"** and see which works you could match to their creators without consulting the wall texts. The answers are often obvious: Judd's practical objects look much like his straight artistic ones, but with the planes adjusted to more useful heights; Dan Flavin's place settings are edged in fluorescent-bright colors that reflect onto the dishes below them; Robert Rauschenberg's tire lamp has the filthy elegance of one of his mid-century combines. Additional furnishings come from Scott Burton, Joel Shapiro, Sol LeWitt, Richard Tuttle, and John Chamberlain, among others. Comfort is not always the point: the room that was once Mrs. Carnegie's bedroom has been refurnished with shin-bruising minimalist pieces, and Tom Sachs's "Bitch Lounge," in white tufted leather, was designed as an uneasy chair. Through

JAZZ NOTES

ALL ABOUT AYLER
While stationed in France in 1959, the twenty-three-year-old tenor saxophonist Albert Ayler learned the French national anthem, which he called "La Mayonnaise." In 1961, he met the comedian Redd Foxx, who told him to "play what you believe in." By 1964, Ayler's concerts were "a giant tidal wave of frightening music," according to Ted Joans, an American poet who saw him play in Copenhagen. But in November of 1970, Ayler was found dead, floating in the East River.

In Ayler's brief career, his keening, abrasive sound helped redefine the role of the saxophone in jazz, influencing John Coltrane, who cited Ayler as the major inspiration for his recording "Ascension." Ayler's reputation has often felt bigger than his available catalogue—until now, with the arrival of **"Holy Ghost"** (Revenant), a nine-CD set of mostly unreleased Ayler recordings. The CDs are housed in a gorgeous plastic replica of a hand-carved "spirit box," along with a definitive two-hundred-and-eight-page book on Ayler, exacting reproductions of concert flyers, a photo of the young Ayler, and a dried flower. (This generosity and attention to design won Revenant three Grammys in 2003 for their boxed set of recordings by the blues musician Charley Patton.)

"Holy Ghost" is a vast compilation—you hear the full arc of Ayler's brief but intense career. In 1962, he draws inside the lines on a lovely version of "Summertime"; in 1964, he writes his own national anthem, the well-known composition "Ghosts"; and at a poorly recorded but remarkable 1969 concert he creates a screaming wall of horns. It is foolish to say that one track can make a nine-CD set worth the price, but the 1968 recording "Untitled Blues" comes close. Over standard blues changes, Ayler summarizes the stations of his journey: honking blues phrases that you might have heard at a Cleveland bar in the nineteen-fifties; the small, singsongy melodies that echoed "La Mayonnaise"; and the circular, high-pitched howling that Ayler and Coltrane both believed was a path to "spiritual unity." There is a similar sense of devotion in "Holy Ghost" itself. As doggedly as Ayler pursued a sound that lay somewhere beyond music, this collection pursues Ayler, a musician who never quite resolves.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

Feb. 27, 2005. ♦ **"Faster, Cheaper, Newer, More: Revolutions of 1848."** Through Jan. 9, 2005. ♦ **"Josef and Anni Albers: Designs for Living."** Through Feb. 27, 2005. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

FEDERAL HALL NATIONAL MONUMENT
26 Wall St. (212-945-0505)—**"The Medici on Wall Street"** brings twenty Italian portraits from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on loan from the Uffizi, to the heart of the financial district. The subjects wear ruff collars instead of power ties, but their tensed postures and unflappable auras make them seem right at home amid today's masters of the universe—even the ruthless-looking children carry sceptres. Through Nov. 12. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—The privately collected statuettes in **"European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection"** are on public display for the first time. Small in stature yet rich in detail, many of the cast-bronze figures still bear traces of the reddish-brown lacquer that made them glow in their collectors' cabinets. Giambologna's centrally installed "Mars" (ca. 1577) is a miniature of one of his famous compositions. A particularly charming example is a mid-sixteenth-century door knocker in the shape of a Nereid (or sea nymph). The image of a maiden with a twisting fish tail was evidently so popular that it graced portals all over Renaissance Venice. Through Jan. 2, 2005. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—A survey of eleven artists from five continents, **"Adaptive Behavior"** takes the disconnect between public and private behavior as its loose subject, revealing in the process the increasingly blurred distinction between documentary and performance. Standouts include Fikret Atay's video of hypnotically stamping feet, Tonico Lemos Auad's almost invisible sculptures of carpet fluff (installed on matching carpet), and Kerry Tribe's eerily simple video portrait of a ten-year-old girl being interviewed by an older man who stays offscreen. The policemen in Yoshua Okon's video are particularly hard to pin down; when they begin to twirl their nightsticks like majorettes, the urge to giggle is underlaid with nervous fear. Through Nov. 13. ♦ Kayle Brandon and Heath Bunting's **"Rules of Crime."** Through Nov. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"If Elected: Campaigning for the Presidency"** and **"Campaigns on Cotton."** A pair of intertwined exhibits. The more general half traces the evolution of personality-based national campaigns through artifacts like William Harrison's 1840 promotions featuring hard cider (his favorite drink), the cheerily overoptimistic 1864 jingle "McClellan Will Be President," "Win with Taft" matchbooks from 1908, Wendell Willkie chewing gum, and a cotton dress printed all over with the word "IKE." The exhibit of textiles consists mostly of bandannas and scarves; the earliest is a calico handkerchief circa 1776 depicting George Washington on a horse, his sword drawn, surrounded by decorative clusters of flags, weapons, and flowers. Through Nov. 3. ♦ **"Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America."** Through Feb. 28, 2005. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

BRIDGET RILEY
A pioneer of sixties Op art, Riley has turned toward Matisse in recent years—specifically the myopic, late-career Matisse who made collages from shapes cut out of colored paper. Riley's current paintings are filled with curving abstract shapes spread out in diagonal rows to create undulating fields of tropical color. Her titles are unrevealing: "Two Reds" includes pink, lavender, and green, but no discernable red. There's a sameness to the compositions, a patterned uniformity that falls far short of Matisse, but her colors are still a feast for the eyes. Through Oct. 23. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

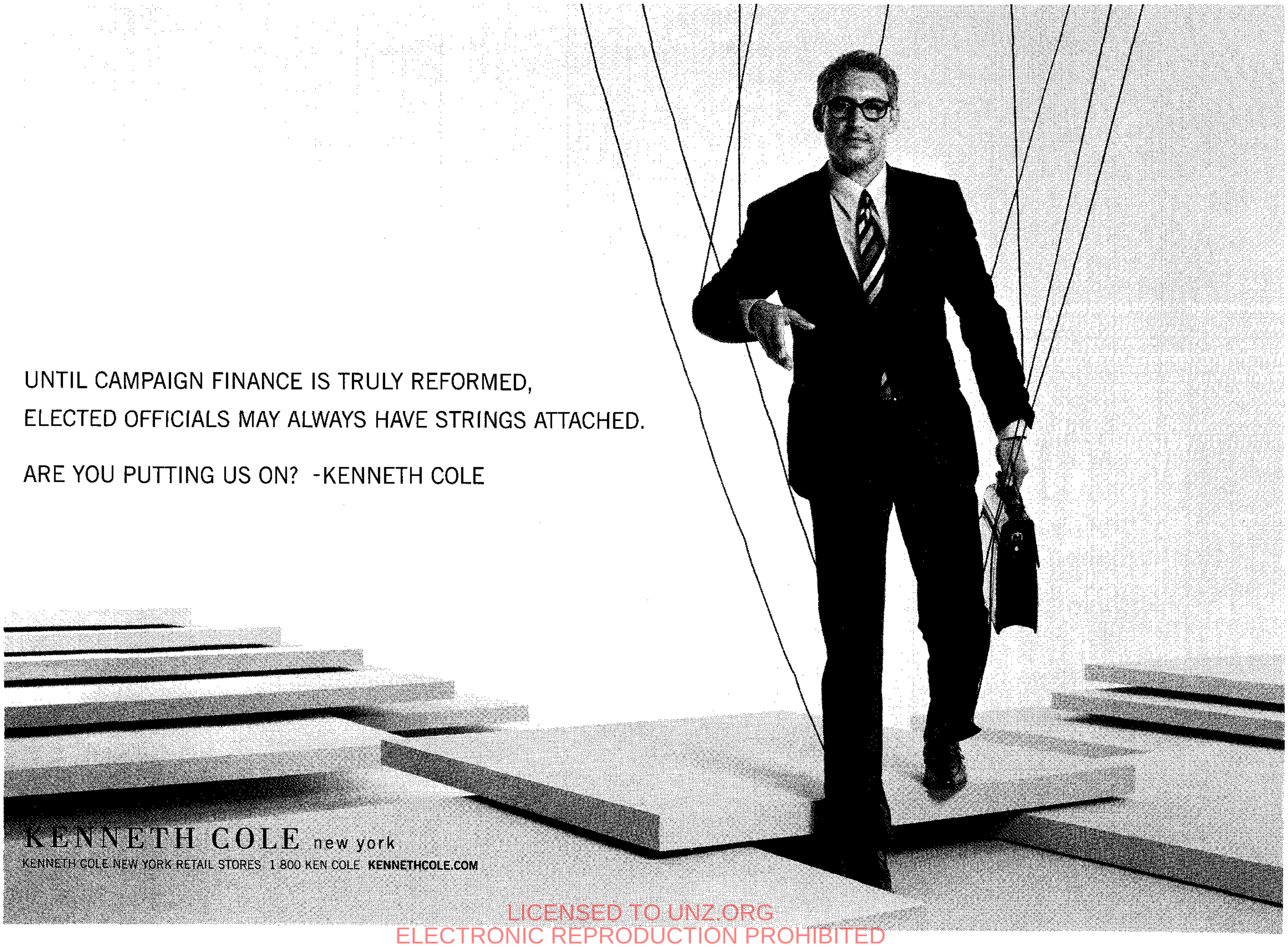
Short List

LESTER JOHNSON
James Goodman, 41 E. 57th St.
212-593-3737. Through Oct. 30.
PAUL HENRY RAMIREZ
Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave.
212-752-2929. Through Oct. 23.
"THREE CLASSICS"
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St.
212-794-0550. Through Oct. 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

HERNAN BAS
Paintings in which lithe young men are posed in deliciously faux-naïve tableaux, sending up Romantic longing and alienation. One boy stands perched among a flock of pink flamingos, while another is caught alone in the rain. "The Lovers of Lyon" play a stylized game of Russian roulette in a cemetery. The gothic vibe reaches theatrically absurd heights in a scattered installation that includes gravestone rubbings from New Orleans and an innocuous-looking "haunted" umbrella purchased on eBay. Through Oct. 16. (Reich, 537A W. 23rd St. 212-924-4949.)

ELLEN GALLAGHER
Gallagher has blown up mail-order ads from the backs of mid-century magazines and arranged them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into heroic, history-painting-size grids. The ads are directed to black women, and most promote hair-care products. Gallagher overlays them with plasticine relief, so that the Afros, updos, falls, and wigs are exaggerated by stiff geometries in butter yellow and stark white. Through Oct. 23. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

BJORN MELHUS
A jumpy, layered three-ring circus of a video installation dissects television time. At its center is a wall projection featuring a trio of Melhuses, one dressed as the artist's signature oily televangelist, two as his blond-coiffed babe assistants. A wall of synchronized monitors bathes the room in soothing color, and a five-screen tower reveals bits of text between flashes of strobe light. The soundtrack includes occasional blasts of deafening static and bleated cries of "I love you!" The effect is not exactly like channel-surfing—it's too choreographed and sinister—but it is not exactly unlike it, either. Through Oct. 16. (Roebling Hall, 606 W. 26th St. 212-929-8180.)

GIORGIO MORANDI
The same boxes and narrow-necked bottles, arranged in pulsating rows of gray and beige, appear in each of these eight small paintings and drawings, dating from 1950 to 1964. All titled "Natura Morta," they comprise the first substantial local showing of the artist's work in many years, and the experience is something like looking back at photographs of one's grandparents as young people—they're firmly of their time, yet surprisingly fresh and stylish, as if the passing of years could never touch their poised vitality. Culled mostly from European sources and private collections, they won't likely be accessible again anytime soon. Through Dec. 4. (Lucas Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 212-243-3159.)

JANE AND LOUISE WILSON
The London twins' ferociously effective new video installation is entitled "Erewhon," after Samuel Butler's dystopian satire of 1872. Five screens are deployed, two of them cantilevered overhead, to immerse viewers in sumptuous images of ruined New Zealand hospitals and reënactments of a young women's exercise class from the period of the First World War. That time in New Zealand was marked by catastrophic losses of young men and by a eugenics-driven obsession with female physical fitness. The Wilsons transform their recondite subject into a dream-adventure with elements of documentary and tableau vivant; the results are mordant, sad, and almost painfully beautiful, reaffirming the sisters' leadership in the thriving art of video installation. Through Nov. 6. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

LEBBEUS WOODS AND KIKI SMITH
The architect Woods and the artist Smith have collaborated on a suite of prints and an illuminated ceiling panel, which they collectively call "Firmament." The prints bear a decorative iconography of dancing skeletons, drooping nightshade flowers, and worms twisted into arabesques; it's the kind of room in which one might expect to be served a cocktail of knockout drops, though the prints, of conventional size and conventionally lit, don't really transcend their unexceptional imagery. Through Oct. 23. (Henry Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-0974.)

Short List

GEORG BASELITZ
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St.
212-741-1111. Through Oct. 30.

RICHMOND BURTON
Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St.
212-242-7727. Through Oct. 16.

RACKSTRAW DOWNES
Cunningham, 541 W. 25th St.
212-242-2772. Through Oct. 30.

PIPILOTTI RIST
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St.
212-206-9100. Through Oct. 23.

UGO RONDINONE
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St.
212-243-0200. Through Oct. 30.

SAM TAYLOR-WOOD
Marks, 523 W. 24th St.
212-243-0200. Through Oct. 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ANNA GALTAROSSA
Galtarossa's rambling, imaginative installations are fabricated from the kind of junk hoarded by children for home art projects. Cardboard boxes are stacked, spread on a low platform, and embellished with scraps of fabric, shells, tinfoil, fake flowers, and more to create "City (Anna)"; a toy train seemingly powered by a plastic human heart chugs through the mess. "Mamma" takes its aesthetic cues from secret forts and carnival rides. Viewers sit on a crude trolley that rolls into a narrow fissure lined with pink stalactites, regressing, theoretically, to a more childlike state as they experience the work. Through Oct. 23. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

"COVER GIRL: THE FEMALE BODY AND ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY ART"
The contested territory in this show is bodily rather than geographic. Emily Jacir weighs in with a wall of abstract drawings, copied from old issues of *Vogue* magazine in which her mother would obscure the more immodest images with Magic Marker. Aysha Adil's street sign bears a hennaed hand warning prospective Muslim brides to think twice before heading any further; she also contributes a video in which she plays a young Pakistani girl being made up for her wedding. The scenes of preparation are contrasted with closeups of sweet pastries frying in a vat of oil, as if to suggest the girl is caught between fire and frying pan. Through Oct. 23. (I.S.E. Cultural Foundation, 555 Broadway. 212-925-1649.)

"FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION NATIONAL MONUMENT"
The giant bright-red megaphone designed by Laurie Hawkinson, John Malpede, and Erika Rothenberg—first shown in Battery Park City as part of the "Art on the Beach" program in 1984—has been installed in Foley Square for election season. It looks like Soviet agitprop, but its spirit is pure First Amendment: visitors are invited to climb up six feet to the speaker's platform and declaim whatever they wish. This can be a deflating experience, however, since the megaphone does little to amplify speakers' voices. Through Nov. 13. (Foley Sq., at the intersection of Pearl and Centre Sts.)

"TALESPINNING: SELECTIONS FALL 2004"
Work by fourteen artists with a bent for storytelling. Ricardo Lanzarini makes tiny ink drawings on sheaves of cigarette papers, binding them into fantastic miniature books with cutout figures flying off the pages. Noriko Ambe carves through the thick layers of books to create topographical sculptures. And Alejandro Diaz's hand-lettered cardboard signs are an irreverent take on the panhandler's plea, bearing silly messages like "Make tacos not war," "Wetback by popular demand," and "Please don't feed the supermodels." Through Oct. 23. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

PAUL CAMPBELL
The more one looks at Campbell's swirling abstractions, the stranger they seem. Despite their drippy, calligraphic lines and hot color combinations (brick red on sunshine yellow, teal on lemon), there's something jerky and mechanical about these images. Sure enough, Campbell's arcs are drawn not with the sweep of his arm but with motorized toys. Little cars and robots are dipped in pigment and set on paper to make their marks, which the artist then isolates and enlarges on canvas. The results teeter between ironic mock-heroism and shtick. Through Oct. 18. (Roebling Hall, 390 Wythe Ave. 718-599-5352.)

SCOTT CARPENTER
A show of paintings and objects entitled "American Triptych," including a functional baseball glove and ball handmade by the artist, is on view in the onetime clubhouse of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Open Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 4. Through

Oct. 31. (The Old Stone House, in J. J. Byrne Memorial Park, 3rd St. between Fourth and Fifth Aves. 718-768-3195.)

"NO RETURN"
A show that speculates on the links between art and commerce. Jed Ela weaves baskets from dollar bills, Lan Tuazon issues his own personal promissory notes, and Peggy Diggs invites visitors to stamp their own cash with questions like "What is satisfied in you by buying things?" Rainer Ganahl produces "Shock and Awe" and "Axis of Evil" postage stamps, which he has passed successfully through the mail. Then there's Pawel Wojtasik's video tour of a sunlit, burbling, downright idyllic sewage-treatment plant, a Freudian sleight of hand suggesting yet another series of connections. Through Oct. 25. (Momenta, 72 Berry St. 718-218-8058.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

LYNN DAVIS
Davis, who is best known for her refined, large-scale, black-and-white photographs of icebergs, pyramids, and monuments toned with selenium and gold, has gone in a new direction for this show. She used color film and made forty-inch-square ink-jet prints that she manipulated digitally, using both positive and negative images in a palette that ranges from deep black through several tones of blue and into gray. The photographs mainly have to do with space exploration, including views of an abandoned launch site in Kazakhstan, a platform at the Kennedy Space Center, in Florida, and an actual satellite launch in French Guiana. The architecture of the blueish scaffolding, cranes, towers, walkways, and girders is rendered formally, and could be intimidatingly cold, but the way the ink falls on the fine German watercolor paper makes the surface of the prints strangely soft and painterly. Through Oct. 30. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

TIM DAVIS
"My Life in Politics" is a look at the banality of American political life. At a fast-food restaurant, Davis found a mural with various depictions of Martin Luther King, Jr., that boldly declares "One People, One Nation, One Taco, One Destiny." After being told that he couldn't use his tripod in the museum at the Nixon birthplace, in San Clemente, California, he instead photographed an iridescent oil stain in the parking lot. The tone is set with the first picture, a ripped and peeling Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington; the show concludes with a series of details of statues called "Founding Fathers' Crotches." Through Nov. 5. (Bohen Foundation, 415 W. 13th St. 212-414-4575.)

TODD HIDO
Moody color prints of desolate American landscapes, taken with long exposure times from behind the windshield of a car. Many of the photographs were made just after a rainstorm, when the windshield was still wet or streaked, which gives them a blurred or, in one case, a "distressed" look, almost as if the Starn twins had been working on it. Telephone poles lean precariously over muddy fields, snow-covered roads twist off to the edge of the frame, and leafless trees stand alone in the mist. The prints range in size from eleven by fourteen to thirty-eight by forty-eight inches, and are austerely beautiful. Through Oct. 16. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

CANDIDA HÖFER
There is a subtle shift toward flesh and blood in Höfer's new architectural interiors. These large color prints—like her clinical depictions of lobbies and lunchrooms—depict ornate Venetian palaces and libraries and museums in the Netherlands. The spaces are devoid of people (except for a subtle self-portrait taken in a mirror at the Palazzo Zenobia), but the elaborate frescoes, classical statuary, and furniture give the vast rooms a human feel. Through Oct. 30. (Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018.)

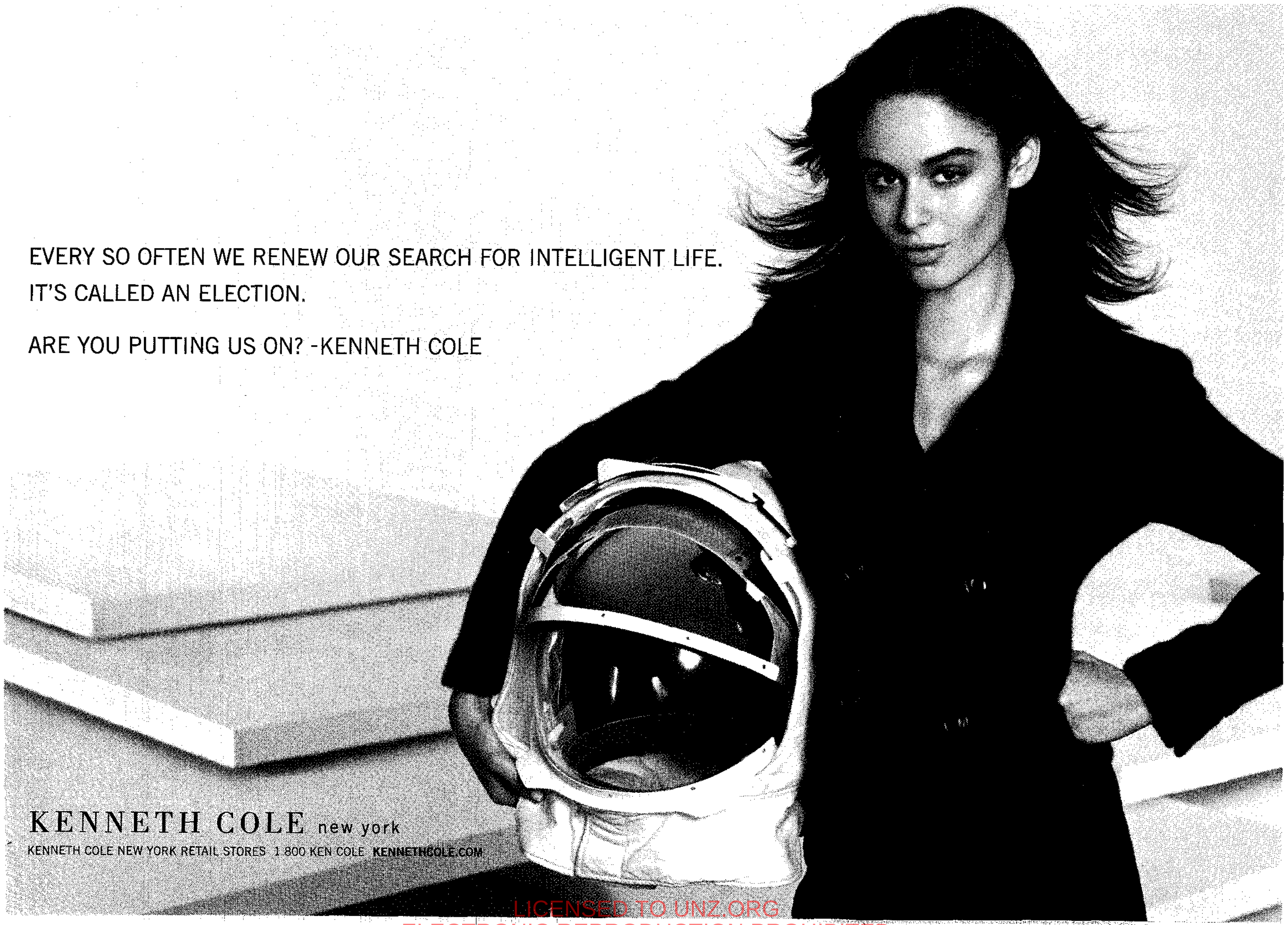
AN-MY LÊ
Black-and-white photographs of scrubby hills pounded by mortar fire, U.S. Marines scanning the horizon, convoys of Humvees snaking along dusty trails, soldiers bivouacking among their jeeps in the desert. Could be Iraq or Afghanistan, but it's just Twenty-Nine Palms, California, where the Marines train to go to more dangerous places. There's a conceptual disconnect here. Lê is a Vietnamese immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1975 with her family at another Marine base in California, Camp Pendleton. In an earlier project, she photographed reënactments of episodes in the war in Vietnam. Through Oct. 23. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

DAVID WOJNAROWICZ
Wojnarowicz made the "Rimbaud in New York" series in 1978 and 1979, twelve years before he died of AIDS. These small black-and-white pictures show a man—maybe Wojnarowicz himself, maybe not—wearing a paper mask made from a copy of the only known photograph of Rimbaud. Wandering through the meatpacking district, Coney Island, and the old Forty-second Street of hustlers and porno theatres, Wojnarowicz's *poète maudite* smokes cigarettes and wears a jaunty scarf. No one on the street or in the subway seems to notice this ghost in their midst, and many pictures were taken of Rimbaud alone in decrepit buildings—holding a gun, masturbating, or simply lying around. Through Oct. 30. (Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

Short List

ERNESTO BAZAN
The Italian Academy, Columbia University,
1161 Amsterdam Ave. 212-854-2316.
Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 12-4.
Through Oct. 24.

MITCH EPSTEIN
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Oct. 16.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ALESSANDRA SANGUINETTI
Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370. Through Oct. 23.

SHOMEI TOMATSU
Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-832-1155. Through Jan. 2, 2005.

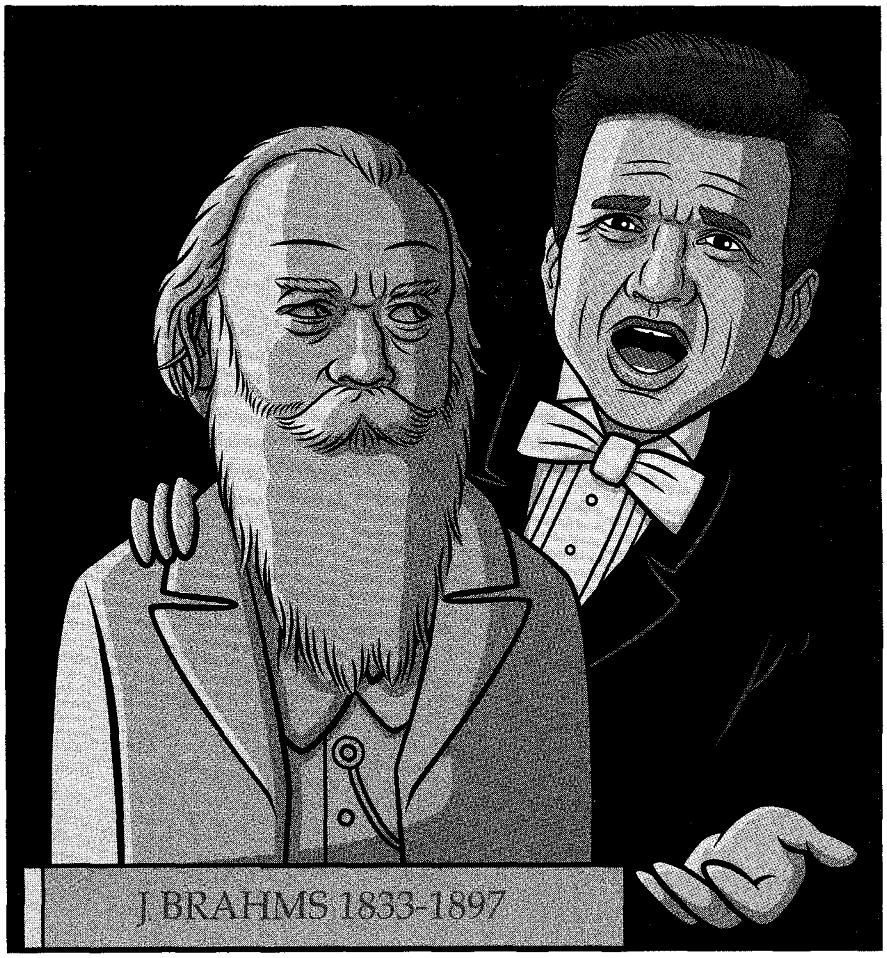
ALEX WEBB
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819. Through Oct. 30.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Oct. 13 at 10:15 A.M.: The house concludes its multiyear sale of timepieces from Seth G. Atwood's Time Museum, in Rockford, Illinois. The lots in the opening session vary widely in style and time of manufacture, from a large and imposing Japanese pyramid clock (circa 1780) to Christian Gebhard's massive and almost comically elaborate world-time clock, begun in France in 1865 and finished in Germany thirty years later. ♦ Oct. 13 at 2 and Oct. 14 at 10:15 A.M.: Two sessions featuring vintage scientific instruments and chronometers, including Thomas Mudge's stunningly complex "Mudge Green" marine timekeeper from 1779 (expected to bring approximately two million dollars), and a hauntingly simple oval-shaped wooden calendar ring from Northern Europe, circa 1500. ♦ Oct. 14 at 2 and Oct. 15 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The auction concludes with three sessions offering a selection of clocks, watches, and horological curiosities from around the world. ♦ Oct. 16 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Photographs. The morning session focusses on works by such figures as Ansel Adams, Alfred Stieglitz, and Paul Strand and includes two curious albums from the Civil War, one of portraits of Union officers, politicians, and notables, the other of their Confederate counterparts. The afternoon will offer up, in addition to works by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Irving Penn, a portrait of a puffy and aging Charlie Chaplin by Richard Avedon, as well as a series of signed vintage prints by Diane Arbus. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

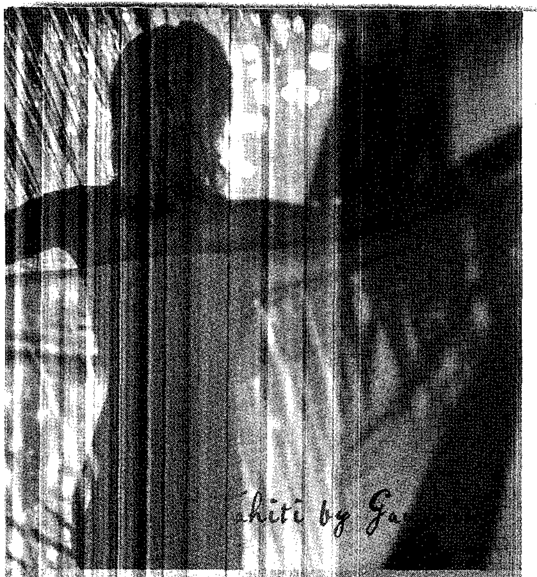
CHRISTIE'S
Oct. 14 at 10 A.M. and 2: The television tycoon William S. Paley and his wife, Babe, collaborated with legendary interior decorators such as Stéphane Boudin, Sister Parish, and Albert Hadley to outfit their much admired homes in New York City and on Long Island. This sale of English furniture features a variety of pieces from the Paley collection, including a pair of Regency oak armchairs by George Oakley and an eighteenth-century George III gilt-wood overmantel mirror. ♦ Oct. 14 at 6: A gala sale of more than a hundred photographs from the personal collection of Elton John. ♦ Oct. 15 at 10 A.M. and 2: Marlon Brando might have been dismayed to learn that his mug—in a famous print by Philippe Halsman—would be expected to fetch a tenth as much as an image of a female backside in this sale of contemporary photographs. Then again, it's Anita's backside, as in "Untitled, Nude (Anita's Back), 1925," by Edward Weston. ♦ Oct. 19 at 2: A sale of silver, objects of virtu, and Russian works of art, featuring an early-twentieth-century silver-gilt and guilloche enamel table clock expected to bring a hundred thousand dollars and an atypically tenderhearted painting ("Jug with Flowers by the Window") by the Russian avant-gardist David Burliuk. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
Oct. 13 at 2 and Oct. 14 at 10 A.M.: Phillips's contribution to this week's photography rush centers on a cache of contemporary photographs from the collection of Bernd Künne (featured in the afternoon session), which includes works by such artists as Bernd and Hilla Becher, Elger Esser, and Nan Goldin. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)



MICHAEL WELDON

Wolfgang Holzmair sings songs by Brahms at Alice Tully Hall on October 17.



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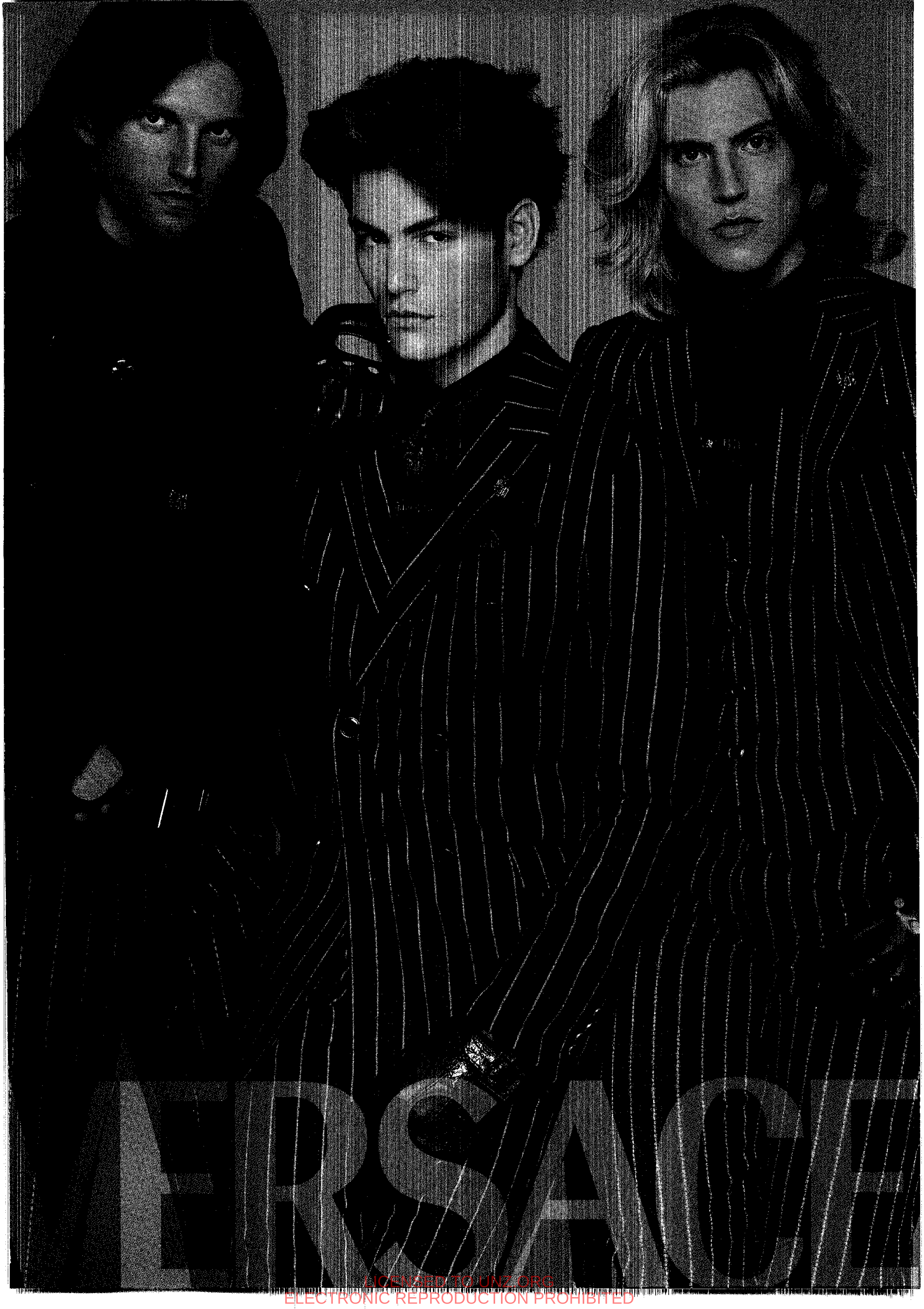
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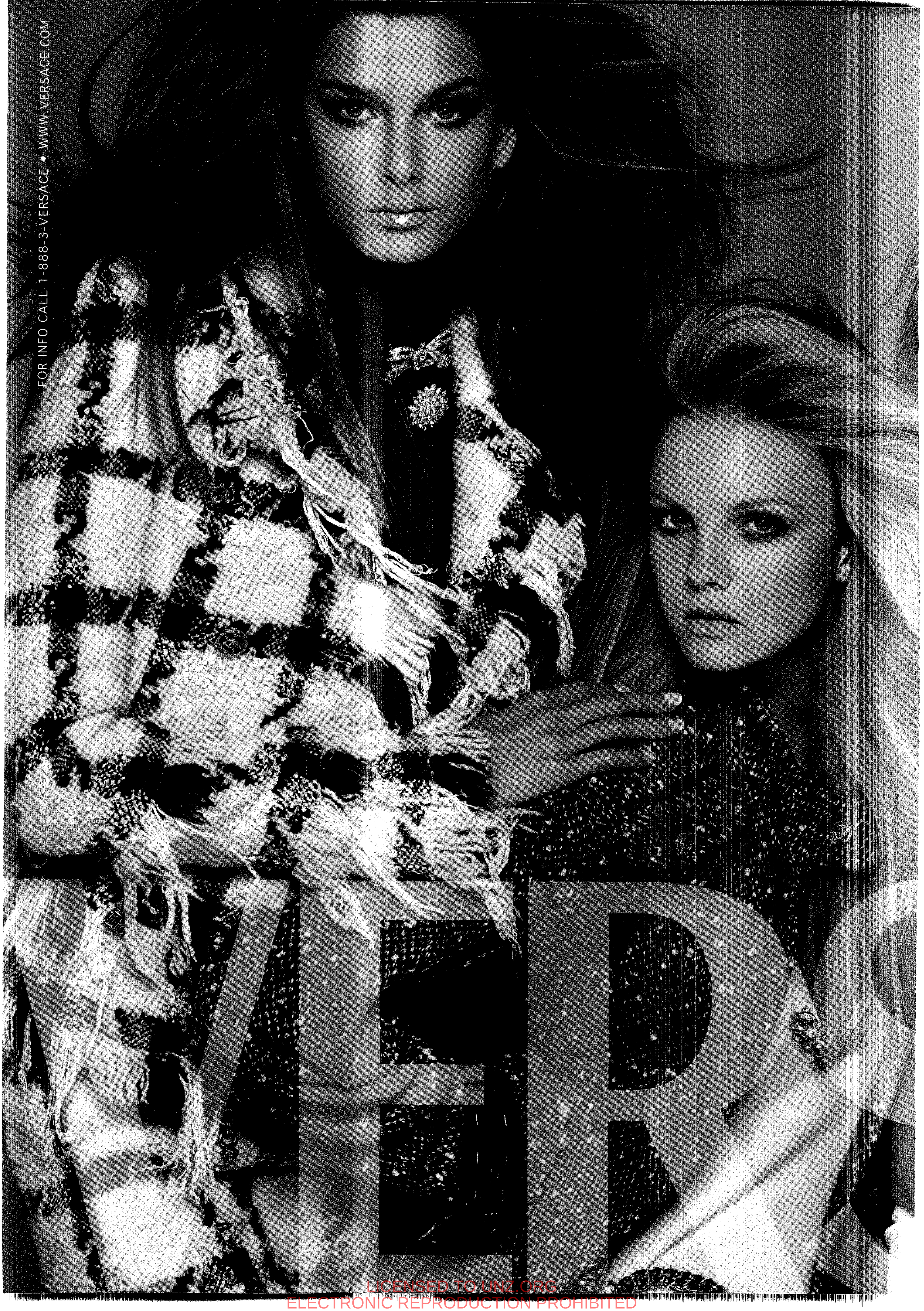
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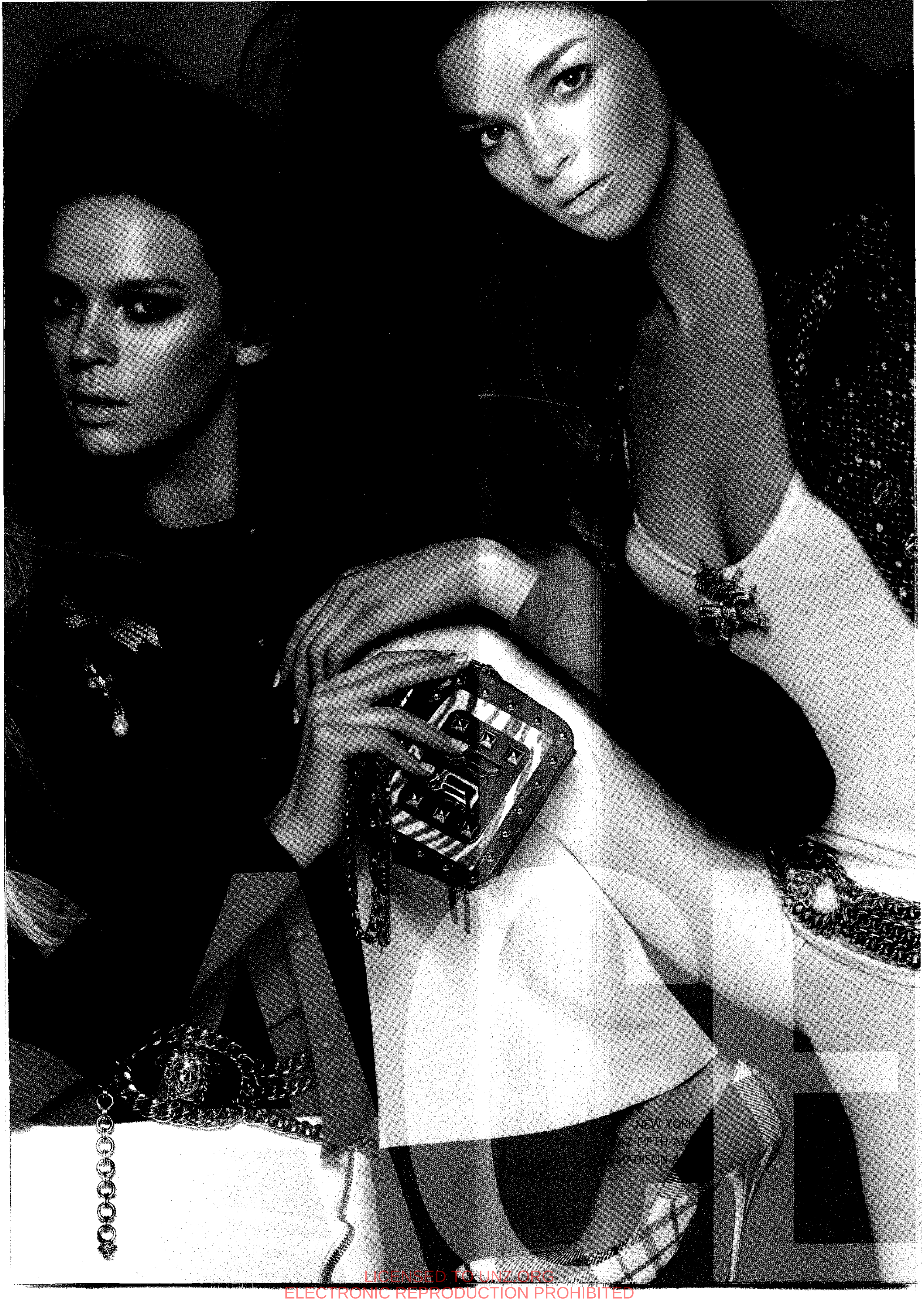
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SWANN
Oct. 14 at 10:30 A.M.: The influences of Mucha and Toulouse-Lautrec flit through a hundred posters by American artists from the Gilded Age, made for such magazines as *Harper's* and *Lippincott's*. ♦ Oct. 19 at 10:30 A.M.: A spread of photographs includes Civil War-era portraits, masterworks by Man Ray and Aaron Siskind, and male erotica. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

INGRAO ANTIQUES
Seneca wrote in the first century that a full-length mirror cost more than the dowry of a general's daughter. You'll need a similar stash to acquire one of the featured specimens of this exhibition and sale of sixty-five looking glasses from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, including a pair of ten-foot-tall Chippendale mirrors from the collection of the Earls of Mexborough and a set of William and Mary mirrors decorated with red *verre églomisé*. (17 E. 64th St. 212-472-5400. Oct. 14-30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Oct. 13 at 7:30: The up-and-coming Russian mezzo-soprano Marina Domashenko takes over the title role in **"Carmen,"** with Neil Shicoff singing Don José, Hei-Kyung Hong as Micaëla, and Ildar Abdrazakov as Escamillo; Plácido Domingo conducts. ♦ Oct. 16 at 1:30: With Fabio Armiliato replacing Shicoff. ♦ Oct. 19 at 8: With Armiliato, Maureen O'Flynn replacing Hong, and Louis Otey replacing Abdrazakov. ♦ Oct. 14 at 8: After years of problems, Ben Heppner's voice has finally returned to its full power: the tenor, overweight once more, sings the title role of **"Otello"** with a lyrical, preternatural ease that belies the difficulty of the most challenging tenor role in all of Italian opera. Barbara Frittoli is his Desdemona, with Carlo Guelfi singing Iago; James Levine. ♦ Oct. 15 at 8 and Oct. 18 at 7:30: Julie Taymor's long-awaited production of **"Die Zauberflöte,"** with Dorothea Röschmann, L'ubica Vargicová, Matthew Polenzani, Rodion Pogossov, Julien Robbins, and Kwangchul Youn; Levine. ♦ Oct. 16 at 8: Sonja Frisell's 1988 staging of **"Aida,"** the crown jewel among the Met's more conservative productions, uses breathtaking sets and resplendent costumes to create a world that matches the grandeur and mystery of Verdi's music—and transcends the star power of any particular cast. This year's roster includes Fiorenza Cedolins (in the title role), Dolora Zajick, Franco Farina, Juan Pons, and Vitalij Kowaljow; Marcello Viotti. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Oct. 14 at 7:30 and Oct. 16 at 8: The final performances of Mark Morris's popular production of **"Platée,"** Jean-Philippe Rameau's 1745 satiric opera. The superb cast includes Christine Brandes, Lisa Saffer, and Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, in addition to members of the Mark Morris Dance Group; Daniel Beckwith conducts. ♦ Oct. 15 at 8: **"La Bohème,"** with Angela Marambio, Julianne Borg, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Grant Youngblood; Steven White conducts the final performance of the season. ♦ Oct. 16 at 1:30: The young soprano Maria Kanyova, a company star in Italian roles, more than holds her own as Violetta in **"La Traviata,"** bringing intense but unstrained projection to the party scenes and sharp yet tender focus in her intimate moments. The designer Thierry Bosquet fulfills Verdi's hopes for a racy nineteenth-century Parisian setting, with a production full of beautifully playful chintz and Orientalia. Also with Eric Fennell (as Alfredo) and Grant Youngblood (as Germont); Ari Pelto. ♦ Oct. 17 at 7:30: With memories of the Met's John Dexter production of **"Dialogues of the Carmelites"** still lingering favorably in the minds of hundreds of New York operagoers, City Opera makes its own claim to Poulenc's melodramatic masterpiece. Rinat Shaham (as Blanche), Gwynne Geyer, Joyce Castle (as the Old Prioress), Eugenie Grunewald, Sarah Coburn, Matthew Chellis, and Jake Gardner are featured in the ensemble cast of Tazewell Thompson's production, which débuted at Glimmerglass in 2003; George Manahan. (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

EUROPA GALANTE: "BACH AND THE BAROQUE CONCERTO"
Bach's Violin Concerto in G Minor is the foundation for an evening of music by Vivaldi, Corelli, and Telemann, offered by the feisty Italian early-music collective and its leader, the violinist Fabio Biondi. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 14 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The Jewish conductor Bruno Walter fled Germany before the war to become an American apostle of musical humanism, while his aging teacher and friend Hans Pfitzner stayed on as an increasingly pathetic Nazi sympathizer. Pfitzner did write some indisputably great music, however, which Walter enthusiastically conducted—such as the Preludes from the opera "Palestrina," which Leon Botstein conducts along with rare performances of Pfitzner's Violin Concerto (with Alexander Markov) and the young Walter's Symphony No. 1. (212-875-5030. Oct. 15 at 8.)

CHORAL SYMPHONY SOCIETY
David Labovitz conducts the Haydn's "Mass in Time of War" (with the New York Cantata Singers) and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor (with Frank Glazer). (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Oct. 17 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

LEIPZIG GEWANDHAUS ORCHESTRA
Brahms, the most conservative of the Romantic composers, is a special focus of the Great Performers series's fall season. The first orchestral offerings will pair the storied German group and their sober and searching conductor, Herbert Blomstedt, with the fire and grandeur of Mikhail Pletnev's piano playing. Oct. 18 at 8: The Piano Concerto No. 1 and the Symphony No. 2. ♦ Oct. 19 at 8: The Symphony No. 4 follows a performance of the Piano Concerto No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

RECITALS

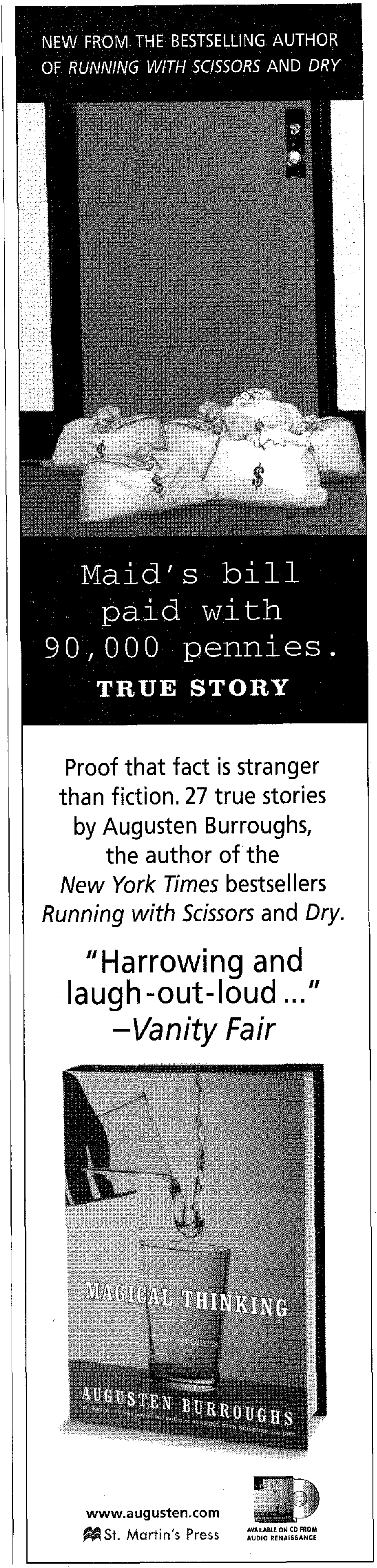
MIKHAIL PLETNEV
The Russian pianist opens the Great Performers season with a recital of works by Bach, Brahms (two late Intermezzi, along with the Scherzo in E-Flat Minor, Op. 4), and Beethoven (including the "Waldstein" Sonata). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Oct. 13 at 8.)

STEVE REICH AND MUSICIANS
Composer and crew perform "Drumming," Reich's minimalist classic from 1971. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200. Oct. 14 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 14-15 at 7:30: An all-Russian program (including Scriabin's Fifth Sonata and Prokofiev's "Sarcasms") from the pianist Olga Vinokur. ♦ Oct. 16 at 7:30 and Oct. 17 at 4: The violinist Julia Bushkova, the pianist Pamela Mia Paul, and other musicians offer a concert of works by Schubert, Smetana, and Dvořák (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Steven Blier launches the seventeenth season of New York's indispensable song series with "Kurt Weill's Berlin," in which he accompanies Constance Hauman, Kimberly Barber, and Peter Kazaras in music by Weill, Eisler, and Hollaender. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 14 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Oct. 14 at 8: The pianist Frederic Chiu joins the wind quintet Windscape for music by Bach and Ravel, along with the Quintets for Piano and Winds by Mozart and Beethoven. ♦ Oct. 16 at 8: An even more eminent grouping—the Guarneri String Quartet and the pianist Peter Serkin—offers Dvořák's



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"SOUNDS LIKE NOW"

A pride of avant-garde lions—including Robert Ashley, Kyle Gann, Joan LaBarbara, Annea Lockwood, Alvin Lucier, and "Blue" Gene Tyranny—gather to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the "Interpretations" performance series with a six-concert festival. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Oct. 14-17. For a full schedule, visit www.interpretations.info.)

NATHANIEL WEBSTER

The promising young American baritone spices up a program of songs by Purcell, Schumann, and Wolf with treats by Ravel (the "Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques"), Bernstein, Gershwin, Rorem, and Rufus Wainwright. Kevin Murphy accompanies him. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 15 at 7:30.)

IAN BOSTRIDGE AND LEIF OVE ANDSNES

The English tenor, an exquisitely sensitive purveyor of tone and text, joins his formidable Norwegian colleague for a performance of Schubert's "Winterreise." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 16 at 8.)

MAURIZIO POLLINI

The incomparable Italian pianist brings his steely poetry to masterworks by Chopin and Debussy (Book II of the "Préludes"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 17 at 2.)

WOLFGANG HOLZMAIR

The extravagantly expressive Austrian baritone sings an all-Brahms recital, accompanied by Russell Ryan. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Oct. 17 at 5.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS

A program of jolly French curiosities (including Saint-Saëns's "Carnival of the Animals" and Milhaud's Chamber Symphony No. 6, for oboe, cello, and four singers) offered by the clarinettist Charles Neidich, the pianist Steven Beck, and others. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. Oct. 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

ANDRÁS SCHIFF

In the first of two concerts, the pianist joins some friends (here, the violinist Yuuko Shiokawa and the cellist Miklós Perényi) for music by Dvořák (the Piano Trio in F Minor) and Janácek, with some Smetana thrown in (the Piano Trio). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 18 at 7:30.)

MUSIC FROM COPLAND HOUSE

The Washington Square Contemporary Music Society plays host to the ensemble, who offer new American works by Chen Yi, Jennifer Higdon, Richard Danielpour, and George Perle. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 18 at 8.)

NED ROREM'S "POEMS OF LOVE AND THE RAIN"

In an acknowledged masterpiece, Rorem sets nine essential poems by American authors (including Auden, Cummings, and Dickinson), then sets the same poems in reverse order, each in a completely different way; the result is a journey without distance, richly affecting and psychologically acute. The mezzo-soprano Darcy Dunn and the pianist Craig Ketter perform it, along with other Rorem songs. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Oct. 19 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

D.U.M.B.O. ART UNDER THE BRIDGE FESTIVAL

This Brooklyn neighborhood of cinematic cobblestone streets and warehouse buildings near the waterfront may be gentrifying rapidly, but it is still home to a number of artists. This annual gathering offers a look at their work and studios. Events include performances (stilt walkers, roving street theatre, live music) along with open studios, art walks, exhibitions, panel discussions, and film screenings (see also Dance). (For more information, call 718-694-0831, or visit www.dumboartscenter.org. Oct. 15-17.)

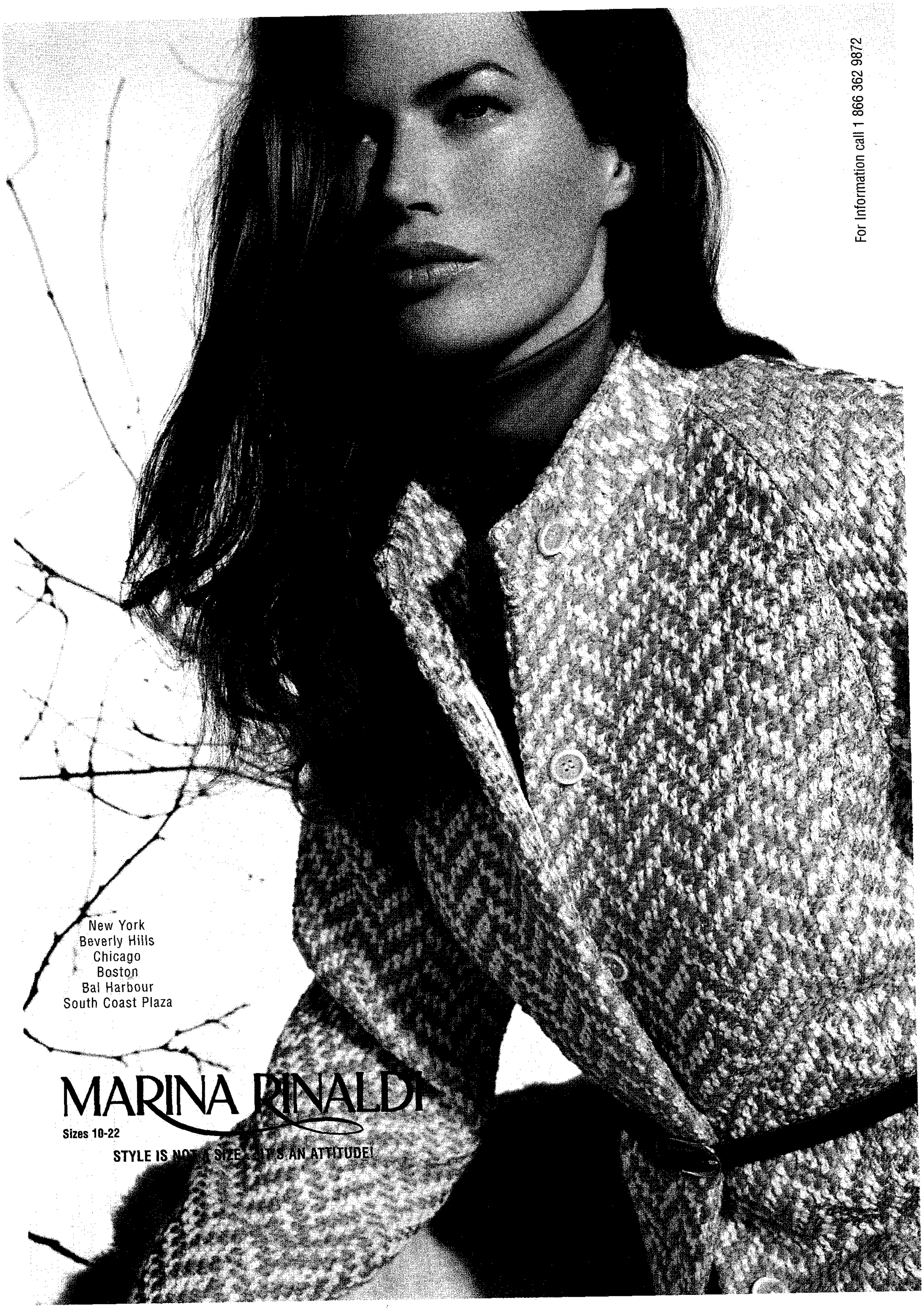
READINGS

Oct. 14 at 7:30: The novelist Walter Mosley introduces Marie Howe, Donna Masini, and Grace Paley, who will read from their work. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ Oct. 15 at 7: The actors Linda Emond and Marian Seldes read from correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 16 at 8: Kirmen Uribe, Mikel Urdangarin, Rafa Rueda, Bingen Mendizabal, and Elizabeth Macklin gather for a night of poetry, music, and food from the Basque Country. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at 1st St. 212-334-6414.)

TALKS

Oct. 13 at 7:30: The *New Yorker* cartoonist David Sipress interviews his colleague Gahan Wilson. (Dixon Place Veteran Series at the Marquee, 356 Bowery, at Great Jones St. 212-219-0736, ext. 106.) ♦ Oct. 14 at 8: The writer Elie Wiesel discusses the future of Jewish life in America. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Oct. 17 at 4: Alex Ross, a music critic for this magazine, and Justin Davidson, a critic for *Newsday*, talk about the future of classical-music criticism. This is the final event in a weekend-long symposium on the subject. (Columbia University School of Journalism, Broadway at 116th St. For more information, call 212-854-1912, or visit www.mcana.org.) ♦ Oct. 18 at 7: David Remnick, the editor of this magazine, joins the *New Yorker* writer Roger Angell and the author Pete Hamill for a discussion celebrating the centennial of A. J. Liebling's birth. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. For more information, call 212-998-7980.) ♦ Oct. 19 at 6: Michael Sokolow, the author of "Charles A. Benson: Mariner of Color in the Age of Sail," gives an illustrated lecture called "Avast! Stranger Do Not Read This Book!," about the journal Benson kept while at sea from 1862 to 1881. (Donnell Library Auditorium, 20 W. 53rd St. For more information, call 212-886-3742.)

"Conversation," by Ernesto Bazan, taken in Little Italy in 1983, from a show called "Italiani d'America" (see Photography).

For Information call 1 866 362 9872
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MOVIES OPENING

ANATOMY OF HELL
Catherine Breillat ("Fat Girl") wrote and directed this graphic psychosexual drama about a self-hating woman. In French. Opening Oct. 15. (Angelika Film Center.)

BEING JULIA
An adaptation of Somerset Maugham's novel about a stage actress (Annette Bening) in pre-Second World War London who has an affair with an adoring fan (Shaun Evans). Directed by István Szabó. Opening Oct. 15.

EULOGY
Michael Clancy's dark comedy revolves around a funeral. The ensemble cast includes Zooey Deschanel, Hank Azaria, Rip Torn, and Debra Winger. Opening Oct. 15.

THE FINAL CUT
Robin Williams plays a "cutter," someone who edits the memories of the dead, in a sci-fi thriller written and directed by Omar Naim. Opening Oct. 15. (Empire 25.)

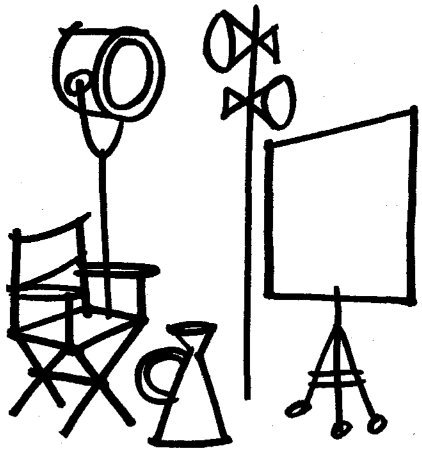
MOOLAADÉ
Ousmane Sembene's new drama is about six African girls who flee a ritual-circumcision ceremony. In Jula and French. Opening Oct. 15.

P.S.
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 15.

SHALL WE DANCE?
Richard Gere plays a bored accountant who signs up for ballroom-dance lessons, in a romantic comedy directed by Peter Chelsom. With Jennifer Lopez. Opening Oct. 15.

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE
Trey Parker and Matt Stone ("South Park") wrote and directed this puppet movie that sends up the war on terror. Opening Oct. 15.

UNTOLD SCANDAL
An adaptation of "Dangerous Liasons" set in eighteenth-century Korea. Directed by E. J-yong. With Bae Yong-jun and Lee Mi-suk. In Korean. Opening Oct. 13. (Quad Cinemas.)



The minimalist, experimental, and influential films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet screen at Anthology Film Archives this week.

FILM NOTES

THE BROWN BUNNY
Another enraging, provocative, solipsistic movie from Vincent Gallo, the longtime New York artist, model, photographer, painter, filmmaker, and general pain in the neck. After losing a motorcycle race in New Hampshire, Bud (Gallo) loads his Honda RS 250 into a black van and begins a cross-country trek home to Los Angeles, where he plans to hook up with his girlfriend (Chloë Sevigny). Much of the movie plays in silence, or near silence, as Bud—a romantic loner unconsciously passing across heroic American landscapes—journeys through plains, mountains, and sunset-red skies. The camera is perched over Bud's shoulder as he drives, and we see, through the front window, the road markers endlessly approaching and disappearing, the landscapes falling away—the bluesy trancelike visions, half monotonous, half mesmerizing, of an insomniac driving beyond need or reason. The movie ends with the notorious scene of Sevigny fellating Gallo, which, for the record, is too oddly framed and distanced to be considered pornographic. In its surly way, the movie casts a spell; the last scene, retroactively, pulls the meanings together.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/13/04.) (Cinema Village.)

CELLULAR
A decent Hollywood thriller, lacking any logic, but entertaining just the same. The veteran screenwriter Larry Cohen, who wrote "Phone Booth," uses the same communication-breakdown gimmick here: a kidnapped woman (Kim Basinger) finds a phone and dials a random number, reaching a mellow surfer (Chris Evans) who becomes hellbent on saving her. The director, David R. Ellis, has fun juggling the two characters (he styles their scenes so that they seem to be in different films), and a cool tension develops between Evans's brightly lit outside world and Basinger's tremulous inside one.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, and 34th Street Theatre.)

THE CORPORATION
America's dominant institution gets a thorough "Frontline"-like going over in this documentary based on Joel Bakan's best-selling exposé. In interviews with C.E.O.s, whistle-blowers, and media figures such as Naomi Klein, Michael Moore, Ray Anderson, and Noam Chomsky, the filmmakers explain corporations as a legal entity and examine their manipulative business practices. They also compare the corporate behavior with that of psychopaths, and the notion is surprisingly convincing.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

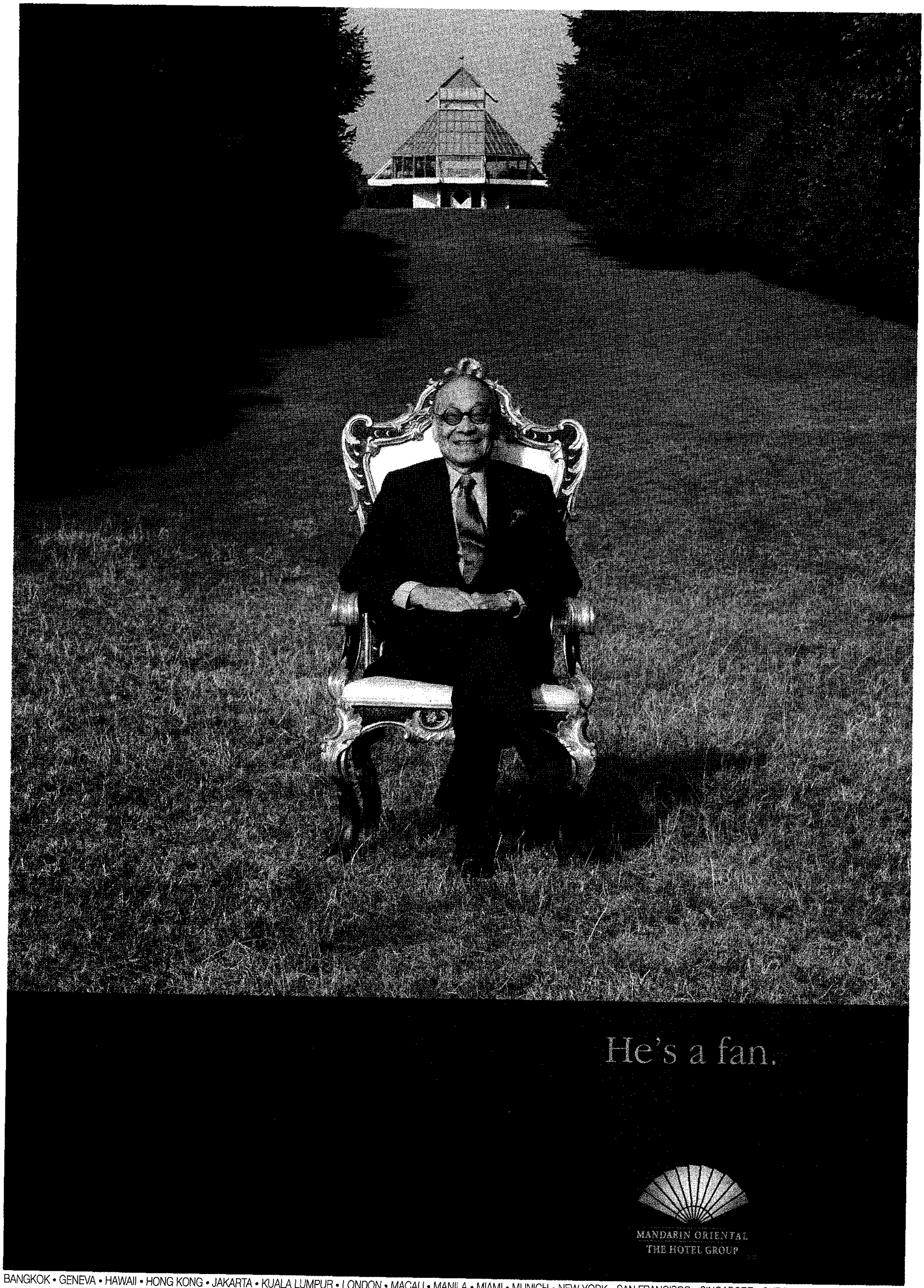
DR. STRANGELOVE; OR, HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB
Stanley Kubrick's Cold War masterpiece hinged on his partnership with Peter Sellers. This comic daredevil's multiple roles, combined with all-out burlesque turns from Sterling Hayden and George C. Scott as American military men, enabled the director to sustain a wild sort of deadpan in the face of nuclear annihilation. Sellers's Captain Mandrake is a relatively sane British military man, befuddled by the Yankee fail-safe know-how around him. His besieged American President is a ludicrously polite bureaucrat. And his Dr. Strangelove epitomizes the Teutonic mad doctors of a thousand movies—an incarnation that gave anti-war college newspapers the perfect psychotic image for Henry Kissinger. When the movie first came out, in 1964, the rap against it was that it was too broad and comedic, that the caricatures of the political and military élite were too silly. Yet Kubrick styled the film as a conventional war movie, from imitation newsreel footage in the ground skirmishes to "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" on the soundtrack, his point being that traditional frames of reference can't capture the scope of nuclear war. What throws some viewers isn't the anti-establishment parody: it's the backbone of irony. Enough of the audience got it at the time to make "Dr. Strangelove" a surprise hit—and enough continue to get it to make it a live, still unruly classic.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Oct. 15-19.)

A DIRTY SHAME
In John Waters's latest Baltimore raunchfest, the always welcome Johnny Knoxville stars as Ray-Ray, a tow-truck driver who saves concussion victims by liberating their libidos. Tracey Ullman is the repressed housewife who becomes his disciple. As the awakened townsfolk speak of carnal Rapture and search for the last untried sex act, Waters delivers a full-out burlesque. The film is winningly nostalgic in the way it harkens back to a time when sexual provocations could be truly transgressive, but the broad lampooning of the Christian community seems dated. Still, Waters's anarchic energy never flags, and he hasn't become cynical. With Selma Blair and Chris Isaak.—*B.D.*(Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

THE FORGOTTEN
An overly earnest Julianne Moore stars in this conspiracy thriller about a woman who is told that she never had the son she's grieving for. The movie begins as an inviting mix of emotional confusion and red herrings as Moore attempts to uncover the truth while also questioning her sanity. But when the story moves into the realm of the supernatural, the tension ends and the overdone special effects take over. Directed by Joseph Ruben.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

GARDEN STATE
Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff), a struggling actor, arrives in his native New Jersey with some extra baggage: his paraplegic mother has possibly committed suicide, he's been on Zoloft since forever, and his one major acting credit is as a retarded quarterback. This would be a difficult burden for any young man, let alone a début movie.

MAXIMILIAN BODE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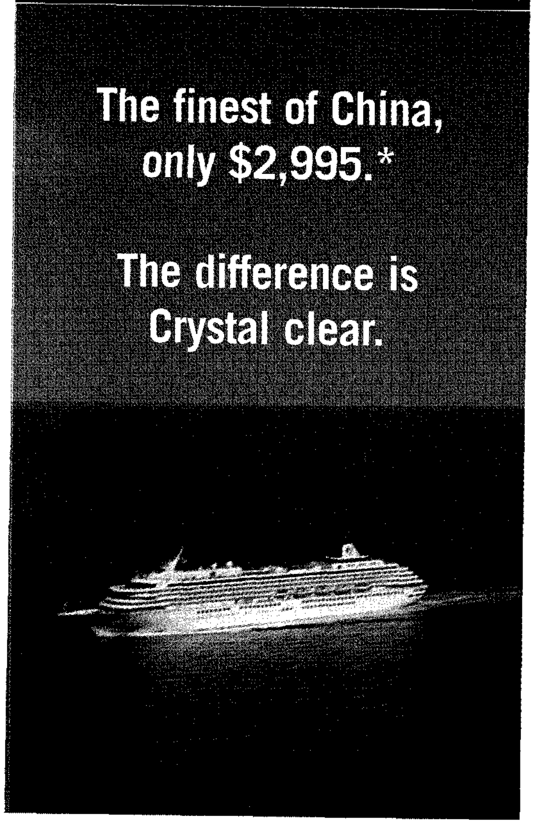
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But Braff, who also wrote and directed, keeps the tone light with some funny homecoming scenes. There's a party where Large is greeted as "Jersey's De Niro," a run-in with a high-school friend turned cop, and, like a winning bass line, the smirking wit of his slacker friend Mark (Peter Sarsgaard). The movie is also lifted by the presence of Natalie Portman, perhaps the ultimate ethereal home-town girl. Although Braff eventually takes the movie to emotional places where only the extremely tenderhearted will follow, there are a lot of resonant moments and a moody, introspective soundtrack.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HEAVEN'S GATE

Michael Cimino's 1980 treatment of the Johnson County War was an epic fiasco and a watershed in movie history, ending the brief era when American directors could expect to function as auteurs. The bloody 1892 conflict between the wealthy cattle ranchers who took over the Wyoming range and the smaller farmers who often thieved off their stock marked an age of moral ambiguity on America's frontier. Cimino reduces everything to a simple case of plutocrats bullying immigrants and spends the first half of his two-hundred-and-nineteen-minute running time depicting the saucy madam Isabelle Huppert bouncing between the Harvard-educated Kris Kristofferson and the rough-and-tumble gunslinger Christopher Walken. Throughout, Cimino operates more like a visual anthologist than a visionary director. There's a "McCabe and Mrs. Miller" bordello vignette, a "Great Northfield Minnesota Raid" baseball match, and so on. There's also a roller-skating scene that includes roller-fiddling. Not until after the intermission do the guns start blasting. "What one loves in life are the things that fade" went the flossy ad line; all the movie really says is that the people one loves in life are sure to die.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Oct. 13-14.)

HERO

The Chinese director Zhang Yimou, having previously worked on a restrained scale, decides to go symphonic. Hence the broad thrusts of this movie, which is set two thousand years ago and is designed to show that, at a time when other modern civilizations were still mud-bound, China was putting the final touches on the process of governing by martial arts. The pitiless leader of the Qin kingdom welcomes a young official (Jet Li) who has allegedly killed off three notable assassins, thus insuring peace in the land. His story does not ring true, and we are duly led through a variety of competing versions, each of them shot in different colors, under different skies. The result is not so much a historical epic as a kind of highly determined ballet: dreamy with bloodless violence, relying less on shades of character than on magnificence of gesture, and closer to the Michael Powell of "The Red Shoes" or "Tales of Hoffmann," say, than to the strivings of David Lean. With the unflappable Maggie Cheung. Cinematography by Christopher Doyle. In Mandarin.—*Anthony Lane* (9/6/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

I ♥ HUCKABEES

David O. Russell's new satire is an authentic disaster peppered with many odd and brilliant moments. The characters, skittering along the edges of the frame, speak only about Big Ideas, say everything four times, quarrel at the drop of a non sequitur, and have sex in uncomfortable places. The hero, one Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman), is the head of an open-spaces conservation group, and he makes a deal with a rising young executive (Jude Law) at Huckabees, a superstore chain, to preserve some woods. Yet Albert, a surly little hysteric, feels lost, so he hires two "existential detectives" (Dustin Hoffman and Lily Tomlin) to find out what's wrong with him. The true existentialist, however, is Caterine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert), a sexy *philosophe* in a limo who believes that life (as it says on her business card) is "cruelty, manipulation, meaninglessness." She and Albert make love on a log. There's much more, all of it devoted to a quarrel between two philosophical viewpoints—that everything is connected and that everything is separate. Russell embraces both sides—there are messy scenes in which everyone talks at once and saner moments, when the eccentricities of the individual characters stand out. With Mark Wahlberg, who is touching and funny as a fireman with nothing on his mind but petroleum. Jeff Baena worked on the garrulous screenplay with Russell.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

INFERNAL AFFAIRS

Some viewers have found themselves challenged by the intricate plot of this film, but anybody used to disentangling an entire bowl of noodles should have no problem. What we have is a little mole-on-mole action, revolving around a couple of Hong Kong cops (Tony Leung and Andy Lau). One works undercover, reporting from the entourage of a drug lord (Eric Tsang). The other works openly for the police department, but secretly as a snitch for the same villain. Neither policeman knows what the other looks like, and it takes a flurry of nervous pursuits and rooftop encounters before the scales fall from their eyes. The movie presents itself as a stack of character studies, but the leads are constructed from layers of impassive cool, and the roles for women—a shrink, an old flame—are comically fleeting. What makes the picture work is its unflagging devotion to the play of gleam and shadow: to a vision of Hong Kong as a natural hotbed of treason and double cross. For those who need a fix of further confusion, two sequels are ready and waiting in the wings. With Anthony Wong as the police chief, who suffers an amazing fall from grace. In Cantonese.—*A.L.* (9/20/04) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and New York Twin.)

LADDER 49

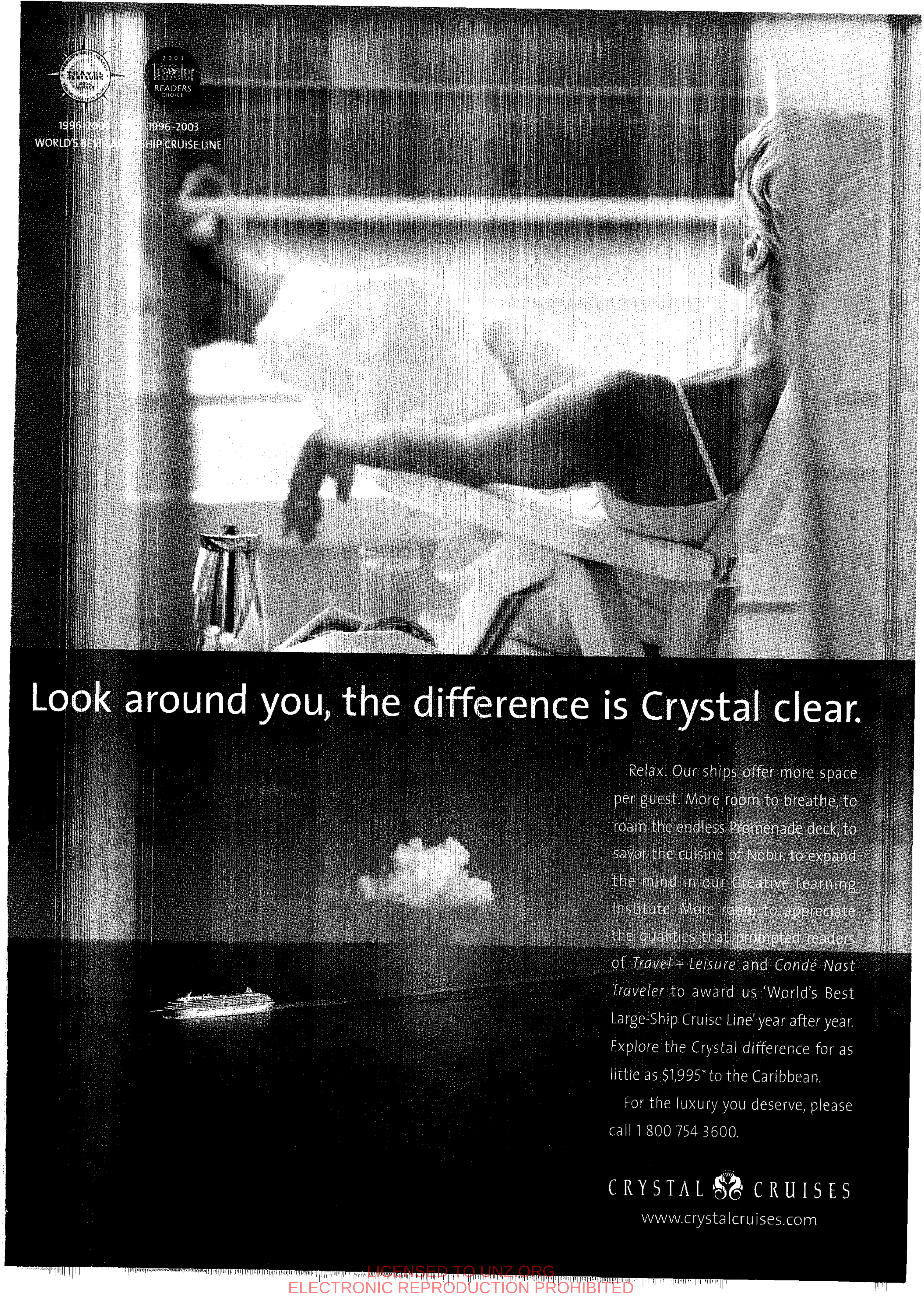
The anguishing setup to this melodrama has a firefighter (Joaquin Phoenix) trapped in a burning building and reflecting on his past experiences. John Travolta co-stars as the station's tough but caring fire captain, and Jacinda Barrett plays Phoenix's anxious but understanding wife. The movie is meant to be inspirational, glorifying the life of ordinary citizens under duress, but as the usual explosive effects rain down, the actors look bored.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MARIA FULL OF GRACE

In this superbly poised independent film, Maria (Catalina Sandino Moreno), a willful seventeen-year-old, unhappily pregnant and stuck in a factory job, agrees to serve as a "mule," carrying in her stomach little pellets of heroin from her native Colombia to New Jersey. Joshua Marston, a thirty-five-year-old N.Y.U. film-school graduate, nosed around Colombia and New York's immigrant neighborhoods before beginning to shoot "Maria," his first full-length feature, and the way he dramatized the material seems instinctively right: he goes step by step, detail by detail, emotion by emotion, eliding nothing, exaggerating nothing. In his calm and lucid way, Marston has made one of the emblematic coming-to-America stories of our time.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Sunshine Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

MR. 3000

Years in development, this fuzzy baseball story about a conceited player (Bernie Mac) who comes out of retirement to fix his record (he's three hits short of the magic three thousand) is a major letdown. Mac, in his first Hollywood lead, doesn't display his usual edge—he gives a neat, love-me performance. It's a shame, because there's a nasty, clever film about baseball hidden underneath the movie's gauzy camaraderie.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th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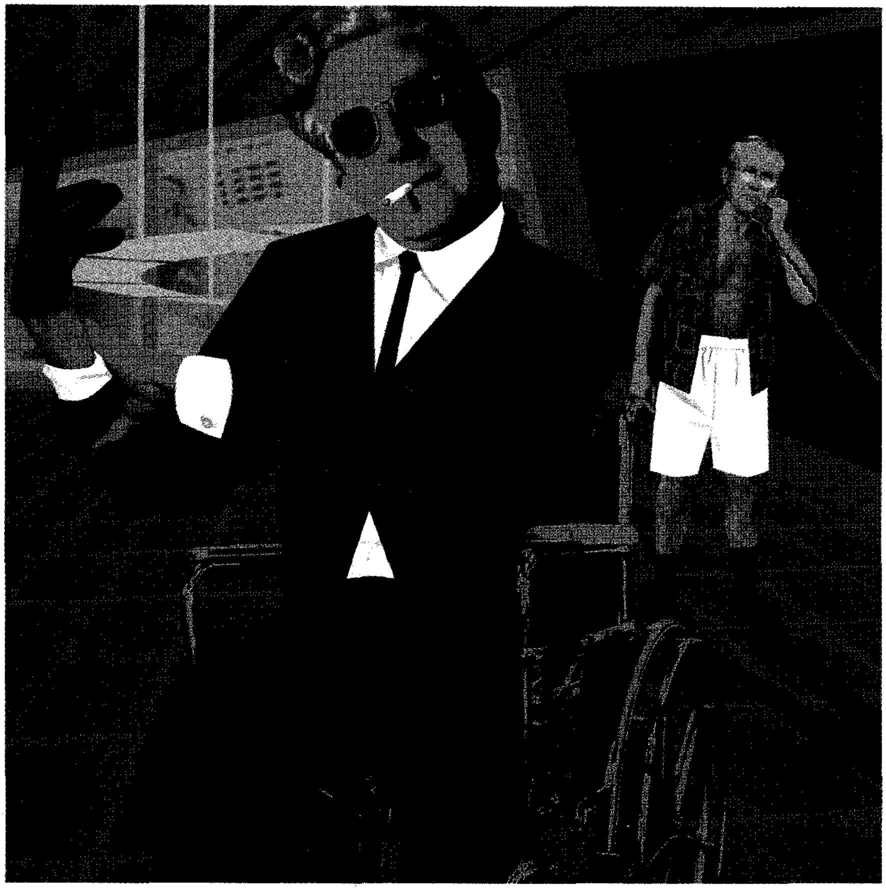
THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

In 1952, a medical student called Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (Gael García Bernal) teamed up with his friend Alberto Granado (Rodrigo de la Serna), a biochemist, and journeyed eight thousand miles through South America. The tale of their travels is the basis for Walter Salles's ravishing, suggestive, and faintly superfluous film. Both young men are of middle-class Argentinean stock, and Ernesto has a girlfriend so rich and beautiful that her family's estate, as Alberto notes, looks like Switzerland. If he had stayed with her, Latin-American history might have taken a more placid turn; instead, Ernesto remounted his motorbike, headed into the Andes, and began the determined process of turning into Che Guevara. The film is sprinkled with gestures toward that future, especially when the two men work at a leper colony on the Amazon, but the foreshadowing doesn't always convince; the sequence in which they meet a pair of wandering Communists on the road and drink in the saga of their suffering is biographically accurate, yet it feels dramatically forced. In the end, the film might best be read as a high-class, episodic buddy picture, with the tubby, more skeptical Alberto (he's like a young Robert Donat) observing with interest the spark of indignation—and the air of chaste reticence—in his impossibly handsome pal.—*A.L.* (9/27/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)



At Film Forum, a fortieth-anniversary rerelease of Stanley Kubrick's "Dr. Strangelove; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb."

JOHN RITTER

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

Deadpan Idaho Dada. The very young married team of Jared Hess (writer and director) and Jerusha Hess (writer), working in Preston, Idaho, Jared's home town, dig into the weird, flat tonalities of loserdom. Their hero, Napoleon (Jon Heder), a high-school senior, can't find anyone to play tetherball with him and gets ritually slammed into lockers by the school toughs. Yet Napoleon is oddly self-possessed; he speaks with an indignant snarl and confronts people without doing them the honor of opening his eyes and looking at them. The Hesses surround this stubborn nerd with wan dreamers and dim failures who don't see themselves as failures—their inexplicable belief in themselves is the movie's most hopeful element. Many of the scenes are brief vignettes punctuated with intentionally awkward physical comedy. The Hesses make jokes out of affectlessness and drabness—the nowheresville prefab tackiness of the houses and the emptiness of a patch of country so remote that not even popular culture touches it. The movie might have worked if it weren't so dead-aired, malicious, and cool.—*D.D.* (6/28/04) (Battery Park 11, Cinema Village, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and 64th and 2nd.)

SHARK TALE

Dreamworks, the Avis of computer-generated animation, may try harder, but, once again, it delivers an artistic disappointment. A fish called Oscar (Will Smith) becomes a celebrity after mistakenly winning a shark fight. Though his fellow undersea creatures have been designed to resemble the stars who voice them (Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro, Renée Zellweger, Jack Black), this does more damage than good—the script is filled with hollow references to past films.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SHAUN OF THE DEAD

It is only natural to be scared of zombies, and to prevent them from laying waste to your home. A more relaxing approach, however, is to be bored and vaguely annoyed by them, or, better still, not to notice them in the first place. This is the premise of Edgar Wright's British comedy, which may be responsible for kicking off a new and specialized genre of slacker horror. Shaun (Simon Pegg) lives a supremely uneventful life, which revolves around his girlfriend (Kate Ashfield), his mother (Penelope Wilton), and, above all, his local pub. This gentle routine is threatened when the dead return to life and make strenuous attempts to snack on ordinary Londoners. The finale, in which the pub turns into an Alamo, is the bloodiest, most orthodox, and least witty part of the movie; far sharper are the early scenes in which Shaun wanders happily to the local store along a battered, zombie-dotted street and pulps his attackers with a cricket bat. The central joke is so snappy and well sustained that you barely catch sight of the ominous vision on offer: a country that already feels like death.—*A.L.* (9/27/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE SHINING

Stanley Kubrick's gothic about the primal fear of a five-year-old boy (Danny Lloyd) that his father (Jack Nicholson) will hurt his mother (Shelley Duvall) and him. The father, who wants to write, brings his wife and child to spend the winter in an isolated, snowbound, haunted hotel in Colorado, where he is to be the caretaker—and where he goes mad and acts out his son's fears. Though taken from a pulp best-seller by Stephen King, the movie isn't the scary fun one might hope for from a virtuoso technician like Kubrick. It has a promising opening sequence, and there is some spectacular use of the Steadicam, but Kubrick isn't interested in the people on the screen as individuals. They are his archetypes, and he's using them to make a metaphysical statement about the timelessness of evil. He's telling us that man is a murderer through eternity. Kubrick's involvement in technology distances us from his meaning, though, and while we're watching the film it just doesn't seem to make sense. Nicholson gives the first hour its buzz, but then his performance begins to seem cramped, slightly robotized; Duvall's performance, however, becomes stronger as the film goes on, and she looks more like a Modigliani than ever. Written by Kubrick and Diane Johnson. Originally released in 1980.—*Pauline Kael* (Sunshine Cinema; Oct. 15-16.)

SILVER CITY

A despairing film from John Sayles—an open-air, Colorado-style noir, in which a fallible but decent ex-investigative reporter (Danny Huston) rediscovers his soul but is unable to prevent a powerful local political family, the Pilagers, from polluting lakes, gutting regulatory restraints on real-estate development, and, in general, running roughshod over Colorado's tender beauty. Sayles's camera ranges with great mobility over political-strategy rooms and construction sites, but, dramatically, he meanders, never working up a full head of steam. The movie feels like "Chinatown" without the malice, the rigorous design, or the narrative epiphanies. Among its incidental pleasures, however, is Chris Cooper's brilliant imitation of George W. Bush holding a news conference. Cooper plays the Pilager scion, Richard Pilager, known as Dim Dickie, a brainless fellow running for governor. With Tim Roth, Maria Bello, Billy Zane, and, as a self-destructive Pilager heiress who sits around and practices archery, Daryl Hannah.—*D.D.* (10/4/04) (Cinema Village, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

At first, it might seem curious that the writer-director Kerry Conran chose to use his digital wizardry to re-create the look of Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" and other Expressionist films, but the nineteen-twenties were a time when the language of film was in a fluid, experimental stage, as directors refined their use of montage, transparency, and camera effects. Now, with the increased realism of computer-generated images, directors like Conran seem propelled by a new sense of possibility about what can be accomplished onscreen. In any event, "Sky Captain" is

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an impressive technical achievement, seamlessly integrating A-list actors into an imaginary world—only, at times, one wishes that this world weren't so dark (literally). Would Conran's computer renderings seem fake in full daylight, or is his commitment to noir just a shade too extreme? His dedication to the celluloid past, however, is beyond question—among the plentiful homages, the immortal Laurence Olivier has a cameo from the crypt. The story is a pastiche of classic sci-fi adventures, with Jude Law as an aviator and Gwyneth Paltrow as a reporter on the trail of a doomsday cult. If the movie is powered more by its rousing, brassy score than by its emotional connections, the slack is taken up by the continuous revelation of Conran's visual inventions.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

STAGE BEAUTY

Billy Crudup, with a slender waist, long lashes, and a bit of a flirtatious pucker, is Ned Kynaston, the reigning Desdemona, Ophelia, and Juliet of the early Restoration period. When the theatre-loving Charles II decrees that henceforth women shall play women, Kynaston is replaced by his dresser, Maria (Claire Danes), who imitates his stylized, Kabuki-like "female" gestures and isn't very good as a woman. Can the homosexual Kynaston play a man onstage? Or in bed? This coarse-grained semi-successor to "Shakespeare in Love" is roistering and appetitive, and the camera rushes about meaninglessly (the theatre director Richard Eyre seems to be demonstrating that he can be as "cinematic" as anyone). Crudup doesn't do badly in the role, but one feels sorry for him—people are always pulling up Kynaston's gown and reaching for his member to see if he's really a man. The movie is unconvincing and graceless, and weirdly anachronistic and overexplicit about gender issues. With Tom Wilkinson as a theatre manager and the dreadful, movie-wrecking Rupert Everett as Charles II. The American writer Jeffrey Hatcher adapted his own play.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Chelsea Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

TARNATION

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

THAT MAN FROM RIO

Philippe de Broca's immensely successful 1964 parody-fantasy on thrillers and adventure films. With Jean-Paul Belmondo, Françoise Dorléac, and Jean Servais. High spirits and bravura and extravagance, but maybe too much of each. In French.—*P.K.* (Florence Gould Hall; Oct. 19.)

VANITY FAIR

In the hands of the Indian-born director Mira Nair, Thackeray's story of social climbing and tumbling emerges as strong meat, sauced to the point of surfeit by the heat of human greed. Becky Sharp (Reese Witherspoon) hasn't got a penny to her name, or a saving speck of conscience, but she has everything else, and, thus equipped, she begins her climb: a spell in the bosom of the Sedley family, courtesy of her friend Amelia (Romola Garai); a grim sojourn in the moldering mansion of the Crawleys; marriage to the dashing Rawdon (James Purefoy), the romance of which soon falters for lack of funds; and, by way of a Faustian finale, the demonic embrace of Lord Steyne (Gabriel Byrne), for whom money has bought a living death. Nair packs the frame with detail, and she never misses a chance to remind us just how much of the wealth of the early nineteenth century was garnered abroad, at the cost of colonial blood and sweat; but this argument comes to flood the drama, until the tale of Becky herself is in danger of being swamped. The novel thrums with incident, like a reporter's notebook, but onscreen that sort of frenzy is too much; viewers like to know what, or whom, to root for, and without that knowledge they feel lost. With an apparently endless list of British actors, including Jim Broadbent, Bob Hoskins, Eileen Atkins, Geraldine McEwan, and (struggling with the slippery role of George Osborne) Jonathan Rhys Meyers.—*A.L.* (9/6/04) (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

VERA DRAKE

In its limited way, perfect. The title character in Mike Leigh's new movie is a middle-aged cleaning lady (Imelda Staunton) who races through her London working-class neighborhood singing to herself. The time is 1950, and though the dark and depressed city still suffers from wartime austerities Vera brings the light. The short, pudding-faced woman drops in on invalids, offers a few words of sympathy, and then makes her way to the luxurious flats of the wealthy, whose objets d'art and fireplace grills she dusts and polishes, sometimes on her knees. Vera gives of herself freely and easily, and it is precisely in that selfless and attentive way—brisk, efficient, consoling—that Vera, using a tube and a noxious solution, terminates one unwanted pregnancy after another. Working with an almost preternatural calm, Leigh sets up the repressive and sexually inarticulate atmosphere of the time; Vera's furtive activity is part of an entire system of shadowy reticence and embarrassed dithering. And Leigh captures, without sentimentality or condescension, the grave and stoical spirit of the English working class. The movie is hushed and intense; it evokes an entire way of life. With Phil Davis as Vera's husband, Stan. Photographed, with immaculate fidelity to a dun-colored London, by Dick Pope.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

WIMBLEDON

The fine actor Paul Bettany ("Master and Commander," "A Beautiful Mind") is done in by this witless romantic comedy, played out on England's most prestigious courts. A miscast Kirsten Dunst stumbles as the upcoming tennis star who inspires Bettany to radically improve his game, and the script, by a trio of screenwriters, is anything but agile. Tennis clichés (the overbearing father, the long-shot contender) abound, and the film's characters are as underdrawn as the film is overpopulated. Clearly designed to be another British ensemble hit, this film, directed by Richard Loncraine, finds the net.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

WOMEN IN LOVE

Ken Russell's 1969 movie could perhaps be described as a gothic sex fantasy on themes from D. H. Lawrence's novel. Visually and emotionally, it's extravagant and, from time to time, impressive. Because Lawrence was one of the most purple of all great writers (perhaps the most, though rivalled by Conrad), Russell's style might deceive one into imagining that he is providing an equivalent to Lawrence's prose. But though Lawrence's passionate imprecision is what's bad in his writing, one can pass right through it in his "Women in Love," because he was reaching for clarity; he might make a fool of himself groping around his characters' psychosexual insides like a messianic explorer, but he was opening up new terrain. Russell, on the other hand, heads right for the purple, and his overheated virtuoso tableaux are piled on for our admiration, not for our understanding. The movie is a highly colored swirl of emotional impressions, bursting with intensity that isn't really grounded in anything. To see this particular movie before reading the book is probably a desecration; the novel is a staggering accomplishment—the sort of book that leaves one dumbfounded at how far its author got—and since there are few English novels of this stature, it's mad to jeopardize one's vision of it by reading it in terms of the actors and images of the film. (The movie is rather like Lawrence's accounts of bad sex.) With the bold, tense Glenda Jackson as Gudrun; Jennie Linden as her unimaginative sister, Ursula; Alan Bates as Birkin; and Oliver Reed, glum and bilious, as Gerald. The adaptation is by Larry Kramer, who also produced.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; Oct. 15-17.)

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FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

GOING UPRIVER: THE LONG WAR OF JOHN KERRY

Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

INTIMATE STRANGERS

Cinema 2 and Village East Cinemas.

PRIMER

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TYING THE KNOT

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VODKA LEMON

Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THE YES MEN

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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Oct. 30: A Ken Russell retrospective. Oct. 15 at 7:30 and Oct. 16-17 at 6:30: "Women in Love" (†). ♦ Oct. 16 at 1: "Elgar" (1962). ♦ Oct. 16 at 2: "The Music Lovers" (1970). ♦ Oct. 17 at 2: "French Dressing" (1964). ♦ Oct. 17 at 4:30: "The Devils" (1971).

Cristina, Lucy & Judith
lunch at the Guggenheim.

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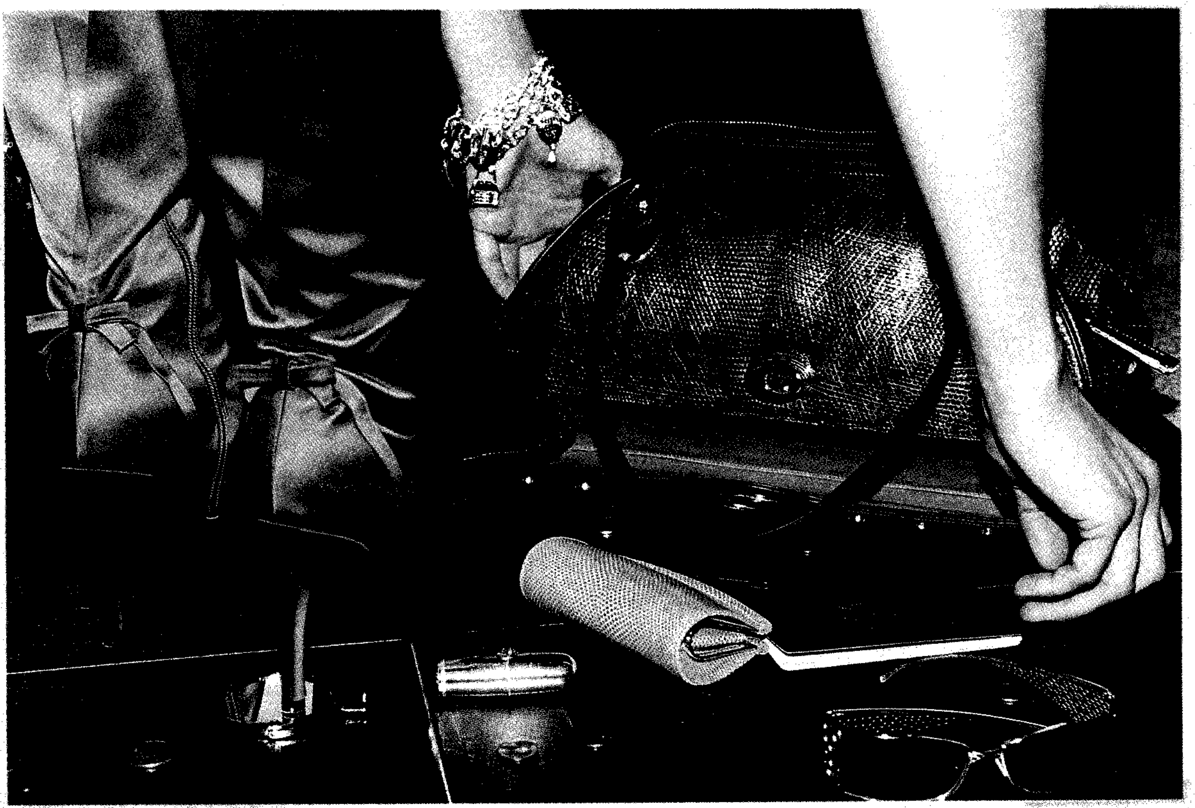

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ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—World première. Oct. 13 at 9 and Oct. 14 at 7 and 9: "The Whisper of the Whistling Water" (2004, Brigitte Cornand). ♦ Starting Oct. 15: A retrospective of films by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. Oct. 15 at 7 and Oct. 18 at 9: "Machorka-Muff" (1962), "Not Reconciled, or Only Violence Helps Where Violence Rules" (1964-65), and "The Bridegroom, the Comedienne, and the Pimp" (1968). ♦ Oct. 15 at 9 and Oct. 19 at 7: "Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach" (1967). ♦ Oct. 16 at 6: "Othon" (1969) and "En Racachant" (1982). ♦ Oct. 16 at 8 and Oct. 19 at 9: "History Lessons" (1972). ♦ Oct. 17 at 6: "Every Revolution Is a Throw of the Dice" (1977) and "Too Early, Too Late" (1980-81). ♦ Oct. 17 at 8: "Class Relations" (1983). ♦ Oct. 18 at 7: "Death of Empedocles" (1987). ♦ Encore presentation. Oct. 15 at 8: "In the Mirror of Maya Deren" (2003, Martina Kudlácek). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Oct. 14 at 8: Films by Ernie Gehr (1991-2001). ♦ Oct. 16 at 3:30: Marie Menken films (1962-68). ♦ Oct. 17 at 3:30: Sidney Peterson films (1946-49). ♦ Unusual films presented by the Walking Picture Palace. Oct. 18 at 7: "Unreal Newsreel" (1936, Joseph Cornell) and others. ♦ Oct. 19 at 6: "Anne of the Indies" (1951, Jacques Tourneur). ♦ Oct. 19 at 9: "The Visitation" (2002, Nathaniel Dorsky) and others.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—A Mexican-film festival. All films are in Spanish. Oct. 14 at 7:30: "Cronos" (1993, Guillermo del Toro). ♦ Oct. 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Loco Fever" (2001, Andrés Wood). ♦ Oct. 16 at 2 and 6:50: "Cabeza de Vaca" (1991, Nicolás Echevarría). ♦ Oct. 16 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Under a Spell" (1998, Carlos Carrera). ♦ Oct. 17 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Devil's Backbone" (2001, del Toro). ♦ Films by Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Oct. 18 at 6 and 9: "Clouds of May" (1999). ♦ Repertory favorites. Oct. 19 at 7:30: "The Grissom Gang" (1971, Robert Aldrich).

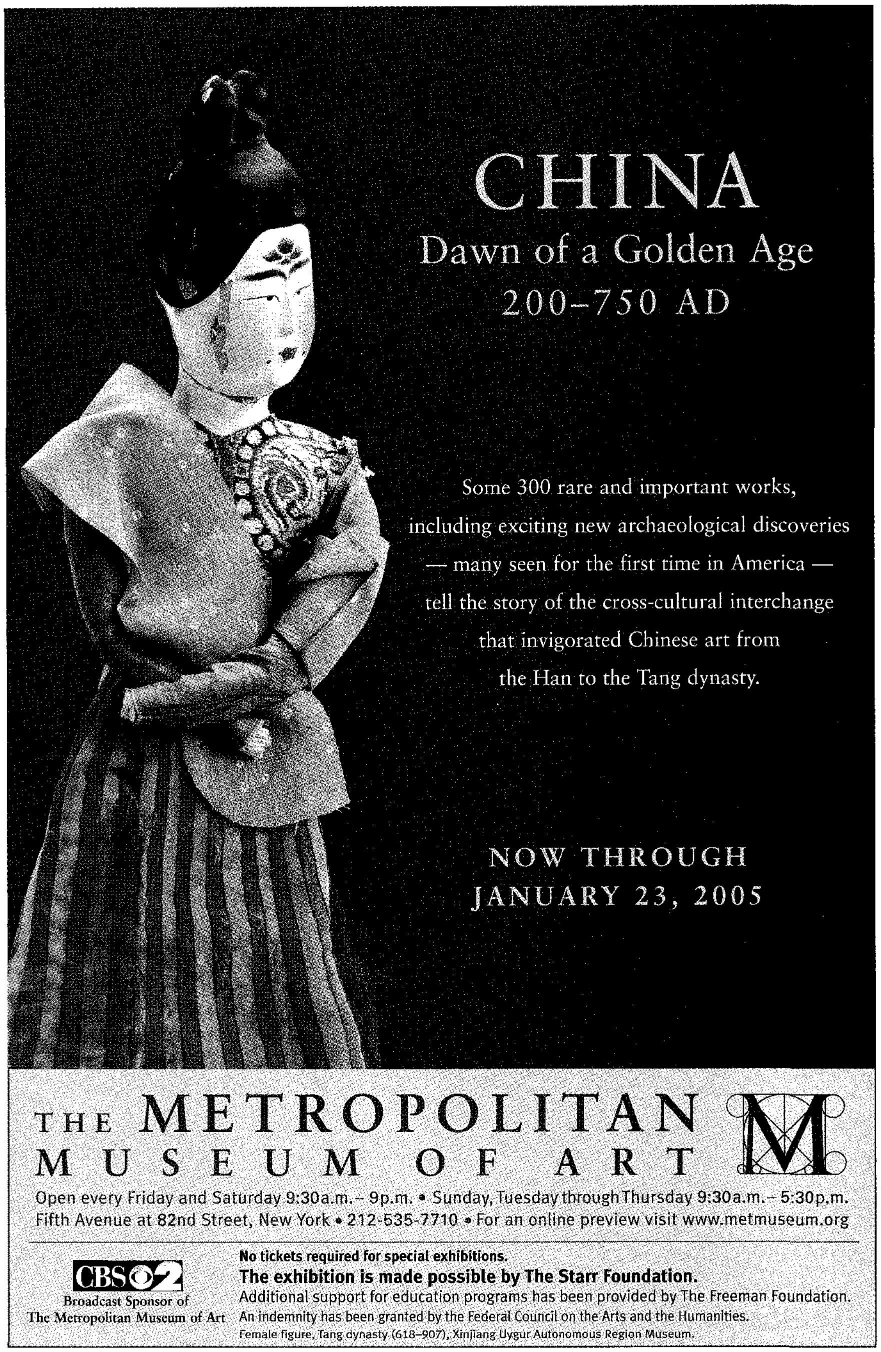
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Oct. 13-14 at 1:20 and 7:10: "Heaven's Gate" (†). ♦ Oct. 15-19 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Dr. Strangelove" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 21: "Sisters: Dorléac and Deneuve." Oct. 19 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "That Man from Rio" (†).

THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (212-875-5050)—Most screenings will be held at Alice Tully Hall. See www.filmlinc.com for details. Oct. 13 at 6 and Oct. 14 at 9: "Moolaadé" (2004, Ousmane Sembene; in French). ♦ Oct. 13 at 9 and Oct. 14 at 6: "Keane" (2004, Lodge Kerrigan). ♦ Oct. 15 at 6 and Oct. 16 at 9:30: "Saraband" (2004, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Oct. 15 at 1 and Oct. 16 at 6:45: "Palindromes" (2004, Todd Solondz). ♦ Oct. 16 at 10 A.M.: "The Gate of the Sun" (2004, Yousry Nasrallah; in Arabic). ♦ Oct. 16 at 4: "Café Lumière" (2004, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 17 at 8:30: "Sideways" (2004, Alexander Payne).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Oct. 15-16: "The Shining" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Oct. 13: "Elegance, Passion, and Cold Hard Steel: A Tribute to Shaw Brothers Studios." All films are in Cantonese. Oct. 13 at 6:15: "Clans of Intrigue" (1976, Chu). ♦ Oct. 13 at 4 and 8:10: "The Last Tempest" (1975, Li Han-hsiang). ♦ Special event: The films of the Marshall Plan. Oct. 14 at 3 and 7:15: "Germany/Austria." ♦ Oct. 14 at 5 and 9:15: "Italy/France." ♦ Oct. 15 at 3 and 7: "By Land and Sea." ♦ Oct. 15 at 5 and 9:30: "Strength for the Free World—from War to European Union." ♦ Starting Oct. 18: Recent films from Hong Kong. All films are in Cantonese. Oct. 18 at 2:15 and 6:30: "Breaking News" (2004, Johnnie To). ♦ Oct. 18 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Infernal Affairs 2" (2003, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak). ♦ Oct. 19 at 2 and 6:15: "Running on Karma" (2003, To and Wai Ka Fai). ♦ Oct. 19 at 4 and 8:10: "Infernal Affairs 3" (2004, Lau and Mak).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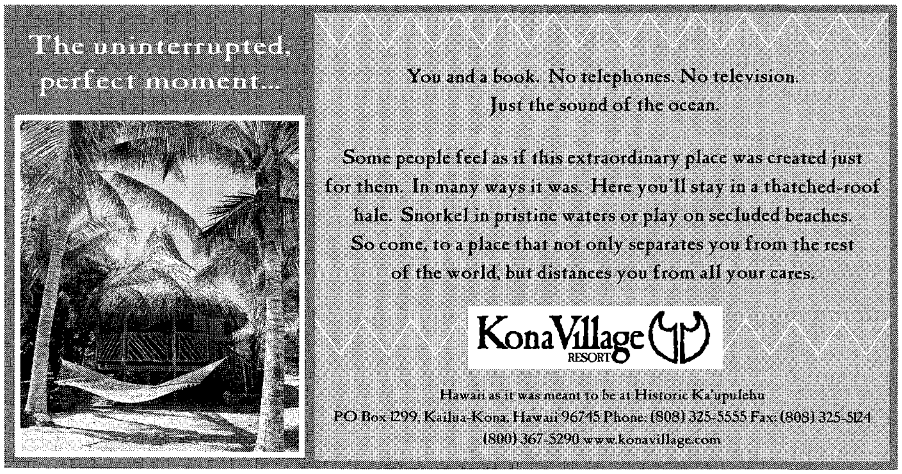
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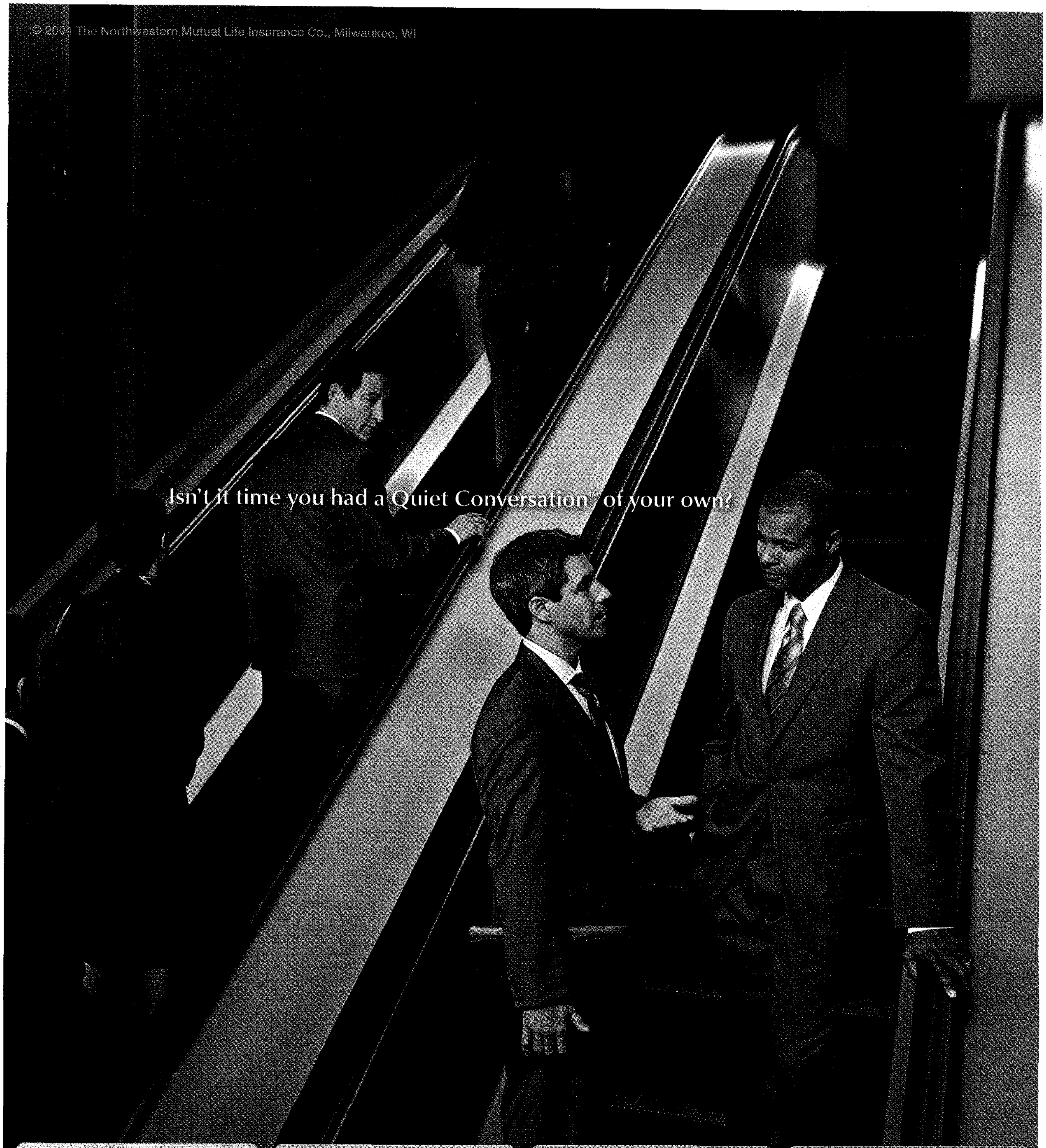
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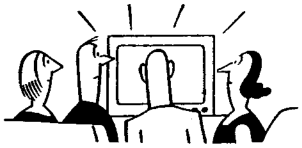
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
STUBBORN THINGS



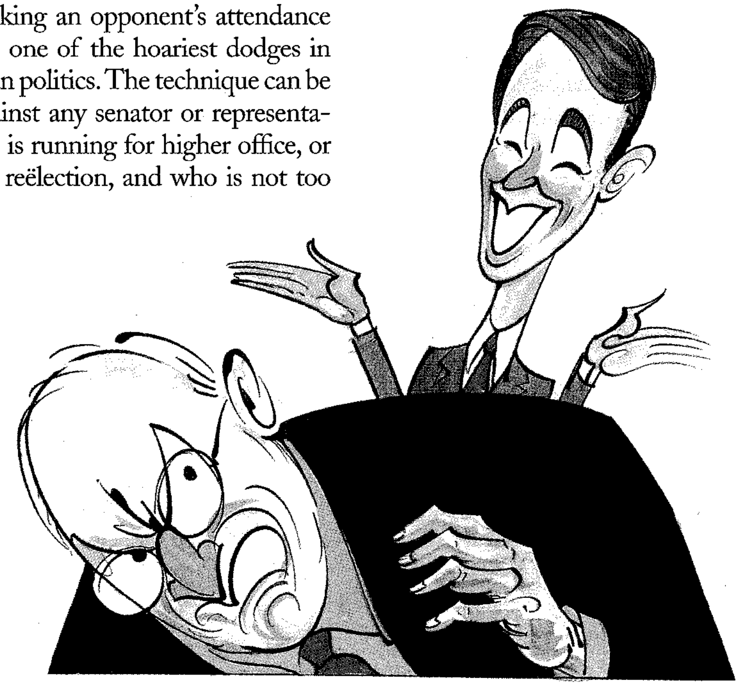
"In your capacity as Vice-President," John Edwards did not say to Dick Cheney in their televised debate from Cleveland last week, "you are supposed to be the president of the Senate and the presiding officer. And, frankly, Mr. Vice-President, your record is not very distinguished. You're hardly ever in the room. I mean, I've sat in that big chair presiding over the Senate way more often than you have, and it's not even my job. Apart from being a spare tire, presiding over the Senate is the one and only task entrusted to you under the Constitution of the United States. Why have you chosen to skip out on your Constitutional duty? Is this like Vietnam, Mr. Vice-President—another case where you had 'other priorities'?"

Senator Edwards, to repeat, did not say this or anything like it. If he had said it he would not have been doing violence to the facts; he would merely have been making a fool of himself. What he did say was that Halliburton, the company of which Cheney was C.E.O. before he became Vice-President, has, among other bad-sounding things, done business with "sworn enemies of the United States" (the allusion was to Libya and Iran), paid big fines for providing false financial information to stockholders, battened on a no-bid, multibillion-dollar contract for work in Iraq, and come under investigation for bribing foreign officials. Evidently provoked by this recitation (accurate enough as far as it went, if unfair in its insinuation of personal corruption on Cheney's part), the Vice-President growled:

> The reason they keep trying to attack Halliburton is because they want to obscure their own record. And, Senator, frankly, you have a record in the Senate that's not very distinguished. You've missed thirty-three out of thirty-six meetings of the Judiciary Committee, almost seventy percent of the meetings of the Intelligence Committee. You've missed a lot of key votes on tax policy, on energy, on Medicare reform. Your hometown newspaper has taken to calling you Senator Gone. You've got one of the worst attendance records in the United States Senate.

Attacking an opponent's attendance record is one of the hoariest dodges in American politics. The technique can be used against any senator or representative who is running for higher office, or even for reëlection, and who is not too unambitious, too torpid, or (in rare cases) too unimaginatively conscientious to depart from prescribed routine. As a line of attack, it depends for its effectiveness on public ignorance of how Congress actually works. Using it is the campaign equivalent of George Washington Plunkitt's "honest graft"—a common practice, sanctified by time and not so terrible in the larger scheme of things.

Still, as Cheney, an old Capitol Hill hand, surely knows, there is no correlation between attendance and distinguishedness. A senator who misses sessions should not be mistaken for a danger to the Republic. That seemed to be the opinion of the "hometown newspaper" Cheney



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERALD SCARFE

quoted, which turned out to be a thrice-weekly broadsheet called the *Pilot*, published in bucolic Moore County, North Carolina. In its post-debate issue, the *Pilot's* pilots ran a good-natured editorial in which they (a) said of Edwards that "the *Pilot* hasn't 'taken to calling him' anything"; (b) described how "the vice president's obscure reference sent us scrambling to our library," where, "sure enough," a fifteen-month-old editorial was found to have remarked that, just as Jesse Helms used to be called Senator No, John Edwards, busy on the campaign trail, "was becoming known as Senator Gone"; (c) noted that Edwards's attendance record was better than those of his congressional colleagues Joe Lieberman, Dick Gephardt, and Bob Graham, who were also running for President at the time, and that his absences had not changed the outcome of any floor votes; and (d) thanked the Vice-President for the plug.

Cheney's scolding went on a little too long. In an obvious attempt to reproduce Lloyd Bentsen's magisterial "You're no Jack Kennedy" putdown of Dan Quayle in the 1988 Vice-Presidential debate, he went in for what he imagined was the kill:

> Now, in my capacity as Vice-President, I am the president of the Senate and the presiding officer. I'm up in the Senate most Tuesdays when they're in session. The first time I ever met you was when you walked on the stage tonight.

Even as assorted cable-chat commentators were savoring the style of this sally ("I think Dick Cheney did awfully well at, first of all, putting John Edwards in his place," Andrea Mitchell said on MSNBC), its substance was collapsing like an overcooked yellowcake. Within hours, the Internet was crackling with photographic and documentary evidence of various Cheney-Edwards meetings in various places, including on the Senate floor. A C-SPAN videotape of the February 1, 2001, National Prayer Breakfast showed Cheney and Edwards seated side by side at the head table. The tape is an hour and twenty-three minutes long. Why did the Vice-President choose to tell such an easily refutable untruth? Perhaps he simply forgot that the two men had, in fact, met. Perhaps, Clinton style, his definition of "met" requires a degree of intimacy greater than mere social intercourse. Who knows? It's a mystery.

And who cares? It's a trivial flub—not quite as trivial as Cheney's recommendation that viewers visit a Web site called Factcheck.com (he meant Factcheck.org), where they were immediately redirected to George Soros's thundering explanation of why the George W. Bush–Dick Cheney ticket must be defeated—but trivial enough. What makes the small untruths "resonate," as the consultants say, is that they were embedded in a latticework of infinitely more consequential untruths, willful errors, and outright lies. The Vice-President said in Cleveland, "I have not suggested there's a connection between Iraq and 9/11." A lie: he had made that suggestion many times. The Vice-President said in Cleveland, "What we did in Iraq was exactly the right thing to do. If I had it to recommend all over again, I would recommend exactly the right—same course of action. . . . We did exactly the right thing." The right thing in a general way, yes—it makes sense for Cheney to defend that proposition. But *exactly* the right thing? Including permitting the looting? Including dissolving the Iraqi Army? Including trashing the State Department's plans for postwar Iraq? That is absurd on its face. Cheney cannot seriously mean it. The Vice-President said in Cleveland that Iraq was "the place where you're most likely to see the terrorists come together with weapons of mass destruction, the deadly technologies that Saddam Hussein had developed and used over the years." There he went again. One day later, the government's twelve-hundred-member Iraq Survey Group released a thousand-page report which concluded that Saddam Hussein had essentially abandoned his chemical-, biological-, and nuclear-weapons programs more than ten years before the Vice-President and his nominal boss, the President, launched their war against him.

Four years ago, the Bush-Cheney spinners persuaded much of the political press corps that Vice-President Al Gore had told a series of fibs—about inventing the Internet, "discovering" the Love Canal waste dump, being the model for a character in "Love Story"—that added up to a "character problem." Their strategy succeeded so well that Bush got nearly as many votes as Gore did. The same assault has been launched against John Kerry, with "flip-flopper" being substituted for "liar." Gore's fibs were nonexistent or trivial or both. Some of Cheney's are trivial, too. Others are anything but, and the tightening polls suggest that the public is taking notice. One is tempted to wonder: are the karmic chickens coming home to roost?

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

HOMEWORK
TO THE EDITOR

Katie, a sixteen-year-old from Lexington, Kentucky, has advice for anyone hoping to get a letter published in the *Times:* "In such a small space, your letter has to convey a lot of passion. You really have to care about what you're saying." "They get a lot of letters that are really formal," Riaz, sixteen, of Alpharetta, Georgia, says. "When they hear letters that are frank and in a common voice, they like that." "But you have to sound intelligent," Chris, sixteen, from Lansing, Kansas, notes. "You can't write it on a third-grade level, because the New York *Times* isn't a third-grade-level paper. It's for a more sophisticated kind of person—at least, that's what I believe."

These young experts belong to what is probably the most successful group of letter writers in the paper's history: Mark Duckenfield's 2004 international-relations class at Duke University's summer program for gifted students. Duckenfield has taught similar classes on and off for the past twelve years, and has always made writing to the *Times* an assignment. "It's a good way to get them to feel engaged with the stories," he said, from his current post at the London School of Economics. But none of Duckenfield's pupils had ever had their letters accepted until this year, when, in the space of one month, his twenty-nine high-school freshmen and sophomores got seventeen letters into print.

The Duke program has two three-week terms. Duckenfield's students broke the *Times* barrier on the last day of the first term, with David's letter defending the South Korean presence in Iraq. The next day, a second student's letter appeared, on the subject of a 9/11 memorial. Two days after that, with the first-term kids already back home, they learned that the

we see
a standing ovation.

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paper had published three more of their letters. "Of course, they were on Internet pornography," Duckenfield said. "But they were quite good letters."

Pleased by this success, Duckenfield gave his second-term students a challenge. "I said, 'If you can do better than the first session, I'll buy you a Vermonster' "—a twenty-scoop sundae from Ben & Jerry's. The results came slowly at first. Andrew's pithy rejoinder to Barbara Ehrenreich was published on July 18th. On the 22nd, Katie defended Linda Ronstadt, and Riaz argued that "Yasir Arafat's incompetence is the best thing that has happened to Israeli neocons." On the 27th, Claire, Reed, and Riaz held what amounted to an intramural debate on the Democratic Convention, and Chris weighed in on a story about a concept car with facial expressions. "I am an old-fashioned man who likes his car to be just that, a car," he wrote with authority, having had his learner's permit for more than a year. On August 1st, the *Times* ran five letters about the differences between American and European attitudes toward work. Four were from Duckenfield's students—one of whom wrote in the voice of a mother, the only instance in which a kid deliberately disguised her age. The next day, Jordan had her say on military intervention in Sudan, and then it was time to go home.

Duckenfield does not claim to know the secret to getting a letter into the *Times,* which receives about a thousand letters a day and accepts just under two per cent of them. But he did suspect that there are technicalities that might hurt a correspondent's chances, and he helped his students get around these. He told them to sign their letters from their home towns, figuring that "if they'd all come from Durham, North Carolina, they probably wouldn't have been accepted." And when students got published but wanted to continue writing letters, Duckenfield advised them to use pseudonyms. Two students got in twice, including Reed, who wrote again as Franklin Henderson, because, he said, "I live in Hendersonville, and Franklin just seemed like the kind of guy who would write to the New York *Times.*"

It is because of this subterfuge that Thomas Feyer, who edits the *Times* letters page, cannot bring himself to be happy for the students' accomplishment. "We're not pleased with people who are dishonest with us," he said over the telephone last week. "If somebody has a legitimate letter published, fine. And if they send in another letter two weeks later under a different name, and it's a good letter, in effect they're depriving someone else of a chance to get into the paper." Feyer confirmed that Duckenfield was shrewd to have his students disguise their letters' point of origin. "The odds are, if I saw all these letters coming from the same dateline, then I would have said, well, this is some kind of assignment, and I wouldn't run the letter."

Feyer acknowledged that the students exhibited "good writing and smart thinking," but that's beside the point, he said. "Coming in a climate where journalists are under increasing scrutiny and the *Times* has had its troubles in the last couple of years, and CBS—this isn't of the same order, but we rely on the good faith of our letter writers." He does not consider Duckenfield's assignment a harmless pedagogical stunt.

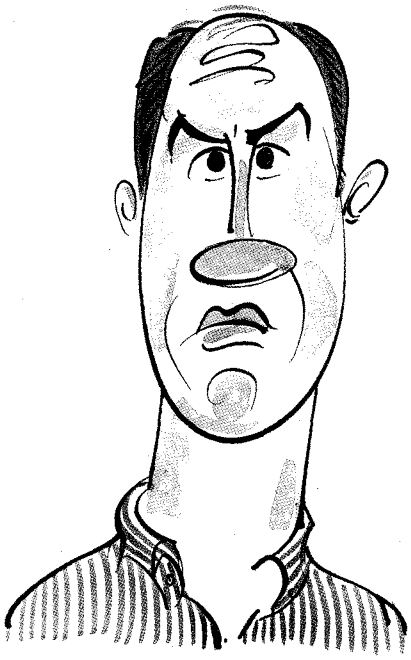
"There wasn't any intent to deceive the New York *Times,*" Duckenfield said, though he called Feyer's discrimination against homework assignments "pretty tacky." He went on, "The students' opinions are just as good as anyone else's, and evidently, in a random selection, they're better than ninety-eight per cent of the opinions they get." In fact, administrators have talked about expanding the *Times* letter-writing project to other classes. "I think the competition would drive out everyone else," Duckenfield said. "There are only a certain number of letters they can print."

—*Daniel Radosh*

CONTENDERS

POST-PUNK

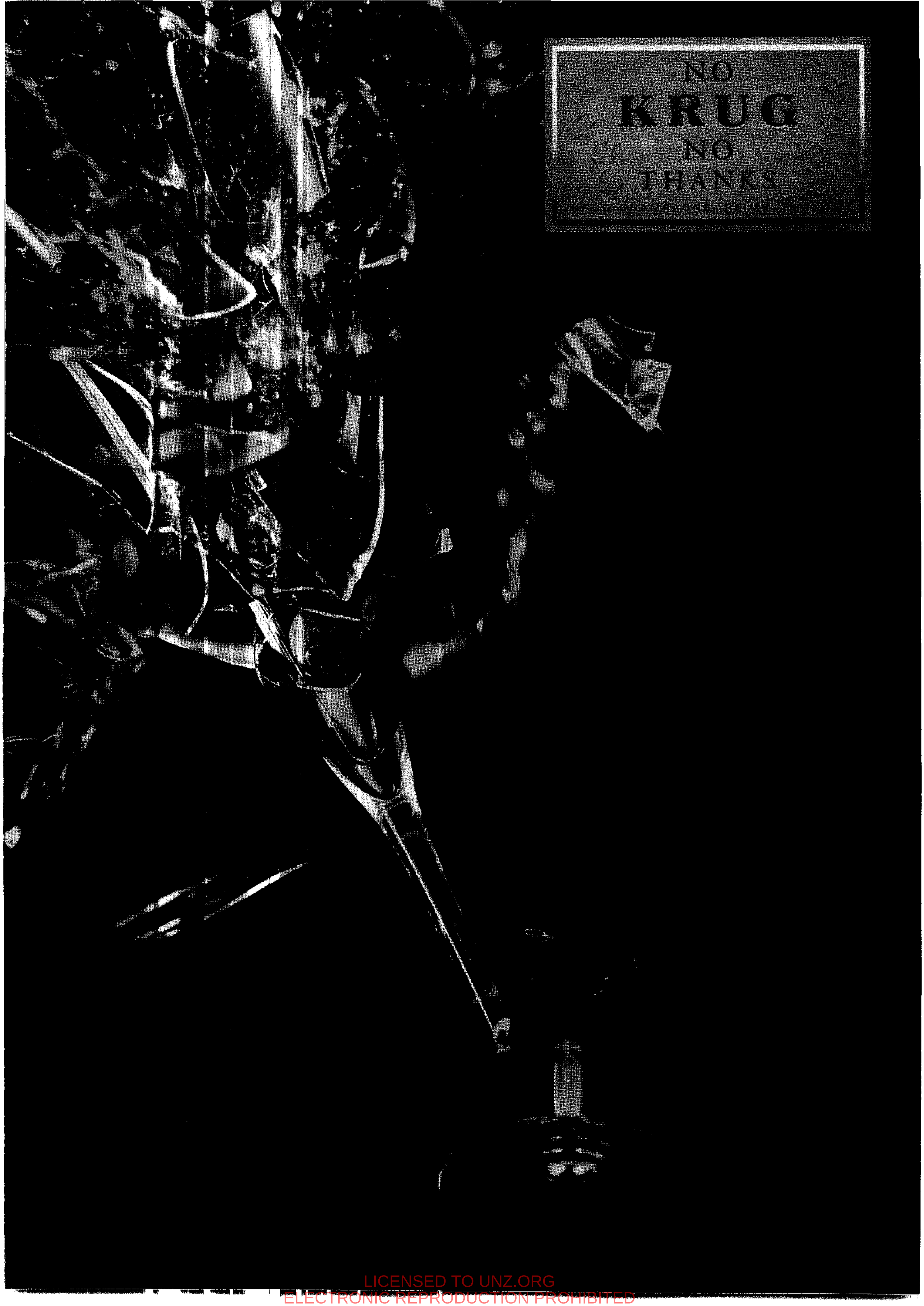
It is customary for politicians to be called rock stars and for rock stars to be active in politics, but there haven't really been any rock stars who are politicians, in the Mr. Smith sense of the word. "Sonny Bono doesn't count," Danny Goldberg, the record executive and liberal activist, said one night last week. "He was television, not rock and roll." Goldberg was standing in the garden behind his town house, in the West Village, in the midst of a party he and his wife, Rosemary Carroll, were throwing for Krist Novoselic, the former bassist for Nirvana, one of the bands Goldberg used to manage. Goldberg was making the case that Novoselic was a serious man, with serious prospects. "He'll be governor of the state of Washington one day," Goldberg said. "He's our Arnold."



Krist Novoselic

The occasion for the party, if not for the comparison, was Novoselic's new book, "Of Grunge and Government: Let's Fix This Broken Democracy!," which Goldberg had published, in partnership with Akashic Books (its motto is "Reverse-gentrification of the literary world"). Novoselic was using a book tour to canvass on behalf of some of his pet electoral reforms (instant runoff voting, proportional representation), his promotion of which would be familiar to legislators and alternative-weekly editors in his home state of Washington. He's a local-politics veteran; in 1995, he helped form JAMPAC—the Joint Artists and Music Promotions Political Action Committee—in order to help get Seattle teen-agers access to live music. From there, it was a short leap to ranked ballots.

Novoselic, thirty-nine, is tall and baldish, with a kindly, half-bewildered expression and posture that call to mind the Andy Kaufman character Latka. At the party, he was wearing a wide-striped oxford shirt and new black Carhartt pants, with a big belt buckle. When it


NO
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came time for him to speak, the guests—for the most part, rock-and-roll chroniclers and practitioners in a political mood ("We were thinking that a good name for a band would be Swing State")—gathered at one end of the garden. Novoselic's opening remark, "Hey, thanks for coming," prompted laughter, as though his audience was prepared to receive him as a lampooner of stump talk. But silence took hold as he embarked on a sincere speech about hope ("As I travel around the nation meeting people . . .") and apathy (". . . who have lost faith in our democracy"). He chopped the air with his right hand. His voice had the singsongy cadence of the Pacific Northwest, which to tristate-area ears sounded like Eskimo.

On the rocker-activist continuum, Novoselic would be slotted, ardorwise, somewhere between Don Henley and Dee Snider, but in terms of technical expertise he's probably closer to Frank Zappa. "We're stuck with this eighteenth-century electoral system," Novoselic said, winding up his garden talk. "We need to update our operating system. An electoral system is like an operating system on a computer. We've got this hard drive, and we can tap all the information. We've got a real fast processor; it can handle the participation. But our operating system is like this DOS system from the eighties. We need an open-source democracy, like a Linux system or a Macintosh, a 10.35. And, of course, Windows, the new Windows system, me being from Washington. So, we can do it!"

The state of Washington has not historically been a great incubator of national political talent. The big exception may be Henry (Scoop) Jackson, the longtime Democratic senator and Red-baiter, whose protégés included Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Elliott Abrams. Novoselic is no Scoop Jackson. Still, he has given up on the music business and taken up the scutwork of politics full time. He even considered running for lieutenant governor this fall. In the end, he said, "I decided I'd rather do something than be something." Still, in the spirit of the political game, he won't rule out future campaigns. "It just depends on what's going on, how the landscape looks," he said. "Right now, I'm just looking forward to the next legislative session in Olympia."

—*Nick Paumgarten*

DEPT. OF DETRITUS
YARD SALE

This weekend, Central Park will play host to what is being billed as "THE BIGGEST TAG SALE EVER IN NEW YORK CITY!" Fifty truckloads of rejected possessions will be spread out under an acre of tents, the casualties of a fundamental New York conundrum: so much to want, so little space to keep it in. The event will benefit the city's public schools, and it will amount to a census, of sorts, of the city's material life circa 2004.

Over the past month, city residents have carted their surplus stuff to neighborhood drop spots scattered across the five boroughs. The magazine *Real Simple,* which is sponsoring the sale, published a peppy promotional brochure, with helpful pointers. Under the heading " 'Edit' Your Rooms": "We read books from left to right—and we should 'read' rooms the same way. . . . If you feel your attention straying to another room, take a break or repeat the mantra 'left to right, left to right.' " And, in the "Teamwork" section: "Find a friend or two who support your organizational goals and who have decluttering needs of their own."

On a recent mellow Saturday, a cheerful and efficient woman in her forties named Lisa Matthews was attending to the decluttering needs of the residents of Carnegie Hill, on the Upper East Side. She manned a blue tent set up on the sidewalk and oversaw two men who were loading donations into a truck nearby. (Acceptable: curling irons, electric can-openers, snowsuits, Oprah's List books. Unacceptable: electric blankets, underwear, *Reader's Digest* Condensed Books.)

An older man approached, lugging a box of books. Among the titles he was discarding were Zig Ziglar's "What I Learned on the Way to the Top," John Naisbitt's "Megatrends," and an audiobook of "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus." ("That's the kind of book you only listen to once," he said.) "Oh, look at that!" Matthews said, after he'd left. She pulled out an unopened package of Huggies. "That's very sweet. But we won't be able to use it."

A woman named Inga said that she'd had to thwart spousal resistance to her room-editing efforts. "My husband was still picking things out of the box as I was leaving," she said. She did manage, she confessed with some pride, to sneak out with a few pieces from his Polish folk-art collection.

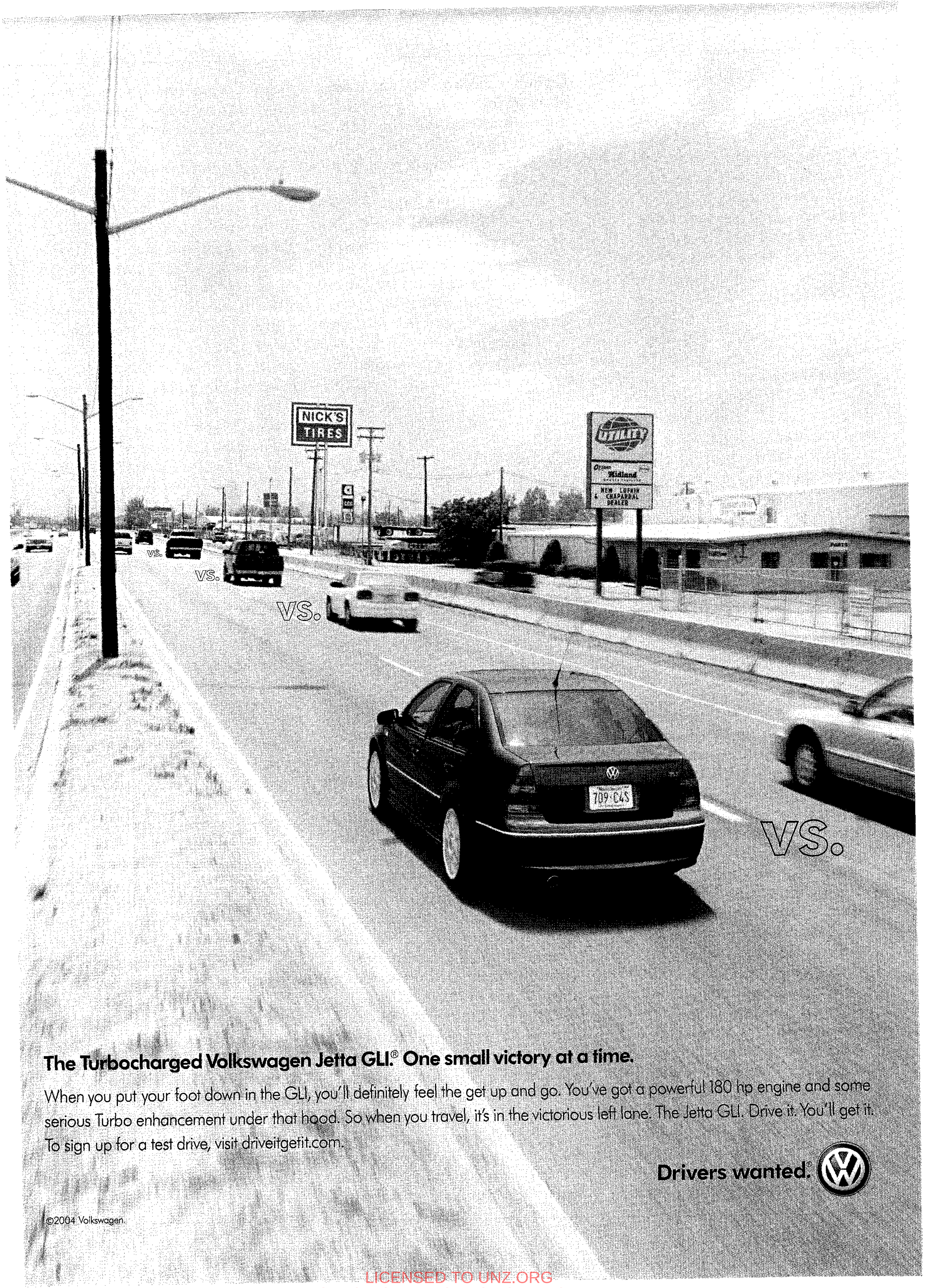
The maxim about how you never really know your neighbors was corroborated repeatedly. A nicely dressed gray-haired couple left a box of books; beneath the volume on top, a glossy coffee-table book titled "Southeast Alaska," were buried "Memnoch the Devil," "The Vampire Companion," and other works of occult literature. Another box—its owner had disappeared before being identified—contained "The Idiot's Guide to Nazi Germany," a thick book called "Farm Tools," and a brand-new UConn Huskies bottle opener. (The package promised, "Hear the Fight Song by the UConn band when the opener touches the bottlecap!")

A bouffant-haired matron wearing an Hermès scarf strode up to the collection tent and announced, "I have boxes for you." A doorman in gray livery appeared in her wake, bearing two overflowing crates. Next came a young mother, wheeling a trunkful of belongings and pushing a girl in a stroller. After the woman unpacked, the little girl asked, "Mommy, why are we giving away our stuff?" The mother said, "Because we have lots."

Farther downtown, at a collection site on the corner of Broadway and Chambers, in Tribeca, there was lots more, though the goods and their means of delivery reflected some neighborhood deviations. Vinyl skirts and leather pants could be seen among the piles; that morning, a man had dropped off an oxygen tank, a bawdy nacho tray (with two concave breasts serving as salsa receptacles), and a giant sombrero. A middle-aged woman made five trips to the drop-off point on a Segway, garbage bags in hand.

As was the case uptown, deaccessioned books were plentiful. When a schoolteacher in clogs handed over a paperback copy of "A People's History of the United States," by Howard Zinn, she was accosted by a neighbor. "You're not giving away the Howard Zinn, are you?" the neighbor asked. "Don't worry," the woman assured her. "I've got a hardback copy at home."

—*Field Maloney*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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

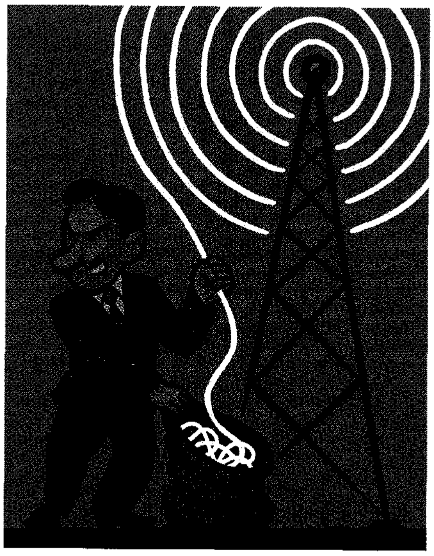
FREE AIR

In the late nineties, Washington policymakers took up a noble cause. There was a new technology, digital television, that almost everyone agreed would eventually revolutionize TV, but—*quelle horreur*—almost no one was adopting it. Among other things, local TV stations couldn't transmit digital signals on their existing analog channels. They needed digital spectrum. (If you think of the electromagnetic spectrum as a highway, digital and analog signals travel in different lanes.) So Congress decided to give the stations a leg up—or, rather, a handout. Instead of auctioning off the digital spectrum (which might have brought in new competitors, not to mention money), or simply asking broadcasters to pay for it (it was worth, conservatively, tens of billions of dollars), Congress offered it to them free. It was, as Reed Hundt, who was the F.C.C. chairman, said at the time, "the largest single grant of public property to . . . the private sector in this century." Senator John McCain was a little more blunt. He called it "one of the great rip-offs in American history."

To be fair, Washington did insist on some quid for its quo. In exchange for the new spectrum, the broadcasters would accelerate their move into digital programming, and they would return their old analog channels. This was the important part; technological innovation had made those channels extremely valuable, for high-speed wireless connections and public-safety radio transmissions, among other things. Of course, the government had given the broadcasters these channels in the first place, so it wasn't exactly driving a hard bargain. But it was getting something, at least.

Something is starting to look more and more like nothing. When the deal was made, in 1997, Washington anticipated that it would get all the old spectrum back by 2006. But now broadcasters have come up with a new plan: they'll keep the new spectrum and hold on to the old spectrum, too. And Congress appears to be going along with it. Last month, the Senate Commerce Committee killed a bill that would set a reasonable but firm deadline of 2009 for the return of the analog channels. In its place, the committee adopted a bill—backed by the broadcasters, naturally—that could enable them to hold on to most of their spectrum indefinitely.

The broadcasting industry is well acquainted with political favoritism and corporate welfare. Local TV stations have consistently been among the most lucrative businesses in the country, but they have never been asked to pay for their use of the public airwaves. In a sense, broadcasters are the modern equivalent of the railroads. In the nineteenth century, the railroads were given tens of millions of acres of land (adding up, eventually, to roughly ten per cent of the country); now broadcasters have been given billions of dollars' worth of electromagnetic real estate.



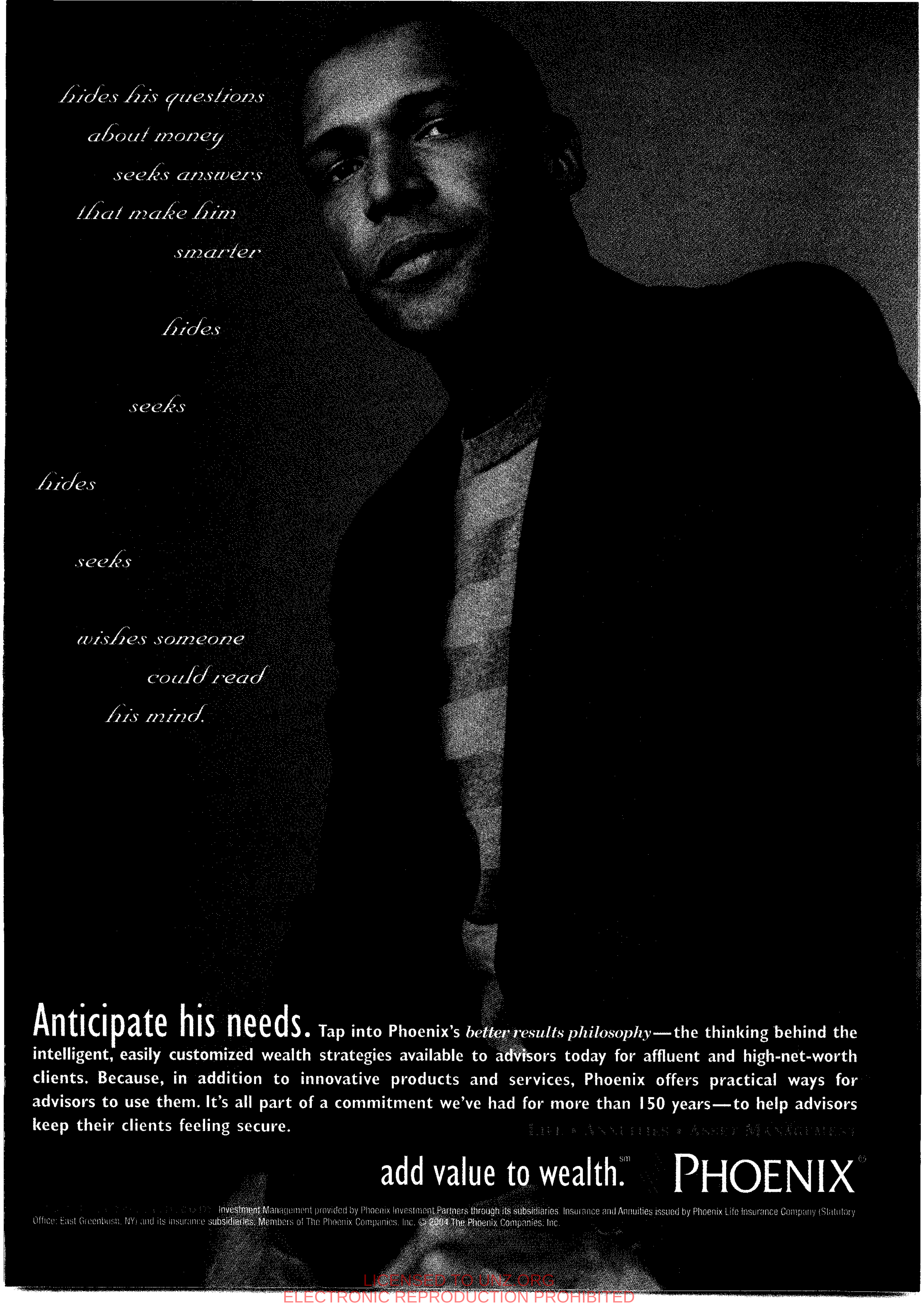
The government subsidized the railroads because it believed that America's economy needed a modern transportation system. It has subsidized TV stations because it wanted the media to serve the public interest. Broadcasters get their licenses free, and, in exchange, they're supposed to keep the citizenry informed. Commendable as this mandate may seem, it has very little to do with the business of broadcast television. Today, most Americans—ninety per cent or so—have cable or satellite TV. The airwaves are used less and less. Nor is there any evidence that the public interest is better served by broadcasters than by cable channels. That the major networks showed just an hour of coverage per night of the national political conventions suggests that it is not. (And it's unclear who is to blame, exactly, for the fact that two out of five Americans think Saddam Hussein was behind the September 11th attacks.) If people would rather watch an episode of "Survivor" than a speech by Al Gore, the network will air "Survivor." This is a sound business decision. But taxpayers shouldn't be footing the bill for it.

Getting the spectrum back raises some esoteric technical issues, such as the application of must-carry rules, but the lawyers can iron those out. And then there are those holdouts whose sets can't receive digital signals or who don't have cable or satellite TV; they'll be out of luck. But that's a small percentage of the population, and it will be even smaller by 2009. Still, for some reason we seem to believe that free commercial television is an inalienable right. We may not be willing to pay for all Americans to have health insurance, but we're content to pay for them to watch "Scrubs." One plan that's been floated would have the government put aside money to buy set-top devices that would allow any television, no matter how boxy and rabbit-eared, to receive digital broadcasts. Silly and impractical as that may seem, it would be worth trying if it would help get back the tens of billions of dollars' worth of analog spectrum that the broadcasters are hoarding.

In fact, the fight over spectrum has little to do with what people watch and a lot to do with what economists call "rent-seeking." "Rents," in econo-speak, are the excess profits that monopolists reap in the absence of competition. By endowing local broadcasters with free channels, the government effectively made them little spectrum monopolists, and the one thing we know about monopolies is that they do not disappear of their own volition. The broadcasters, thanks in large part to their monopolies, have enormous lobbying resources, and their control of the airwaves has made local television—and, in particular, local television news—a powerful weapon to wield against politicians who cross them. Politics drives the business, and the business shapes the politics. As for the public interest—does "Desperate Housewives" count?

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN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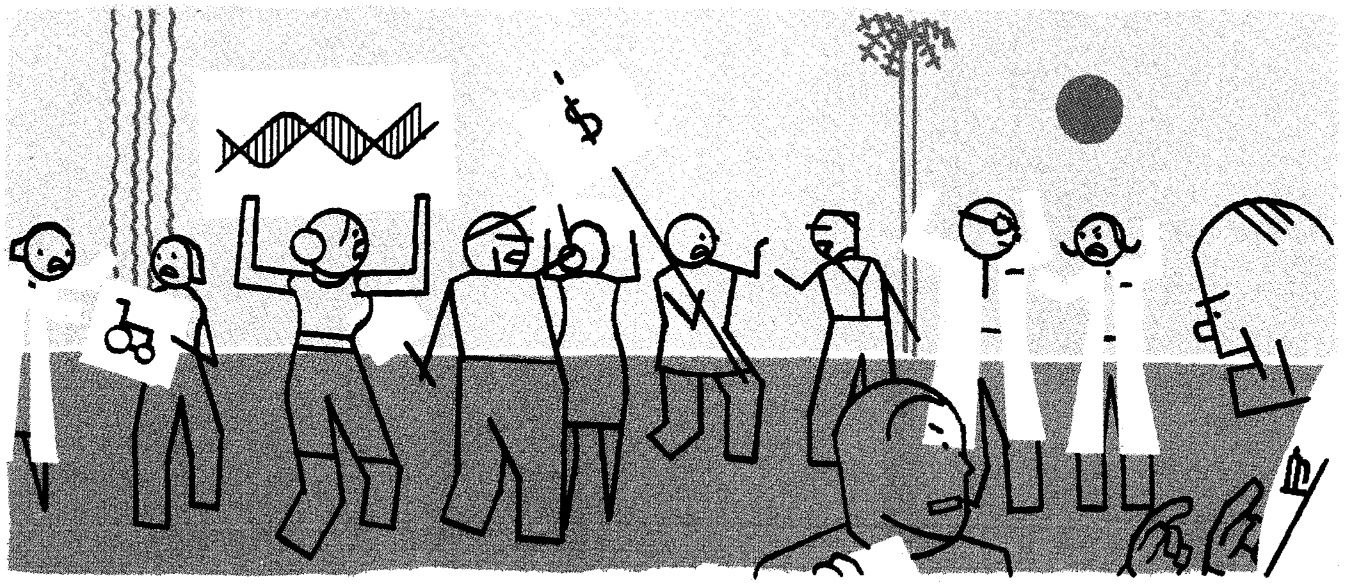
ON THE BALLOT

HOLLYWOOD SCIENCE

Should a ballot initiative determine the fate of stem-cell research?

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Addressing a state legislative committee hearing held in San Diego on September 15th, a young research scientist named Hans Keirstead declared, “Maybe every hundred years we have one major milestone in medical research.” This was such a moment, he said. The committee, chaired by State Senator Deborah Ortiz, was hearing testimony on Proposition 71, a ballot initiative that would result in the state’s investing about three billion dollars in stem-cell research over the next decade. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells that have the capacity to renew and develop into other types of cells. Prompted by research restrictions on embryonic stem cells imposed by the Bush Administration and by threats from its allies in Congress, the initiative constitutes a breathtakingly large debt for California’s taxpayers, particularly in light of the state’s continuing budgetary crisis and cuts in education, health care, and public safety. According to a Field poll published in August, forty-five per cent of California voters favored the initiative and forty-two per cent opposed it. Keirstead’s real audience at this hearing, therefore, was not its presiding officials but the rows and rows of public spectators in the big, packed hearing room and the cameras from a half-dozen TV networks.



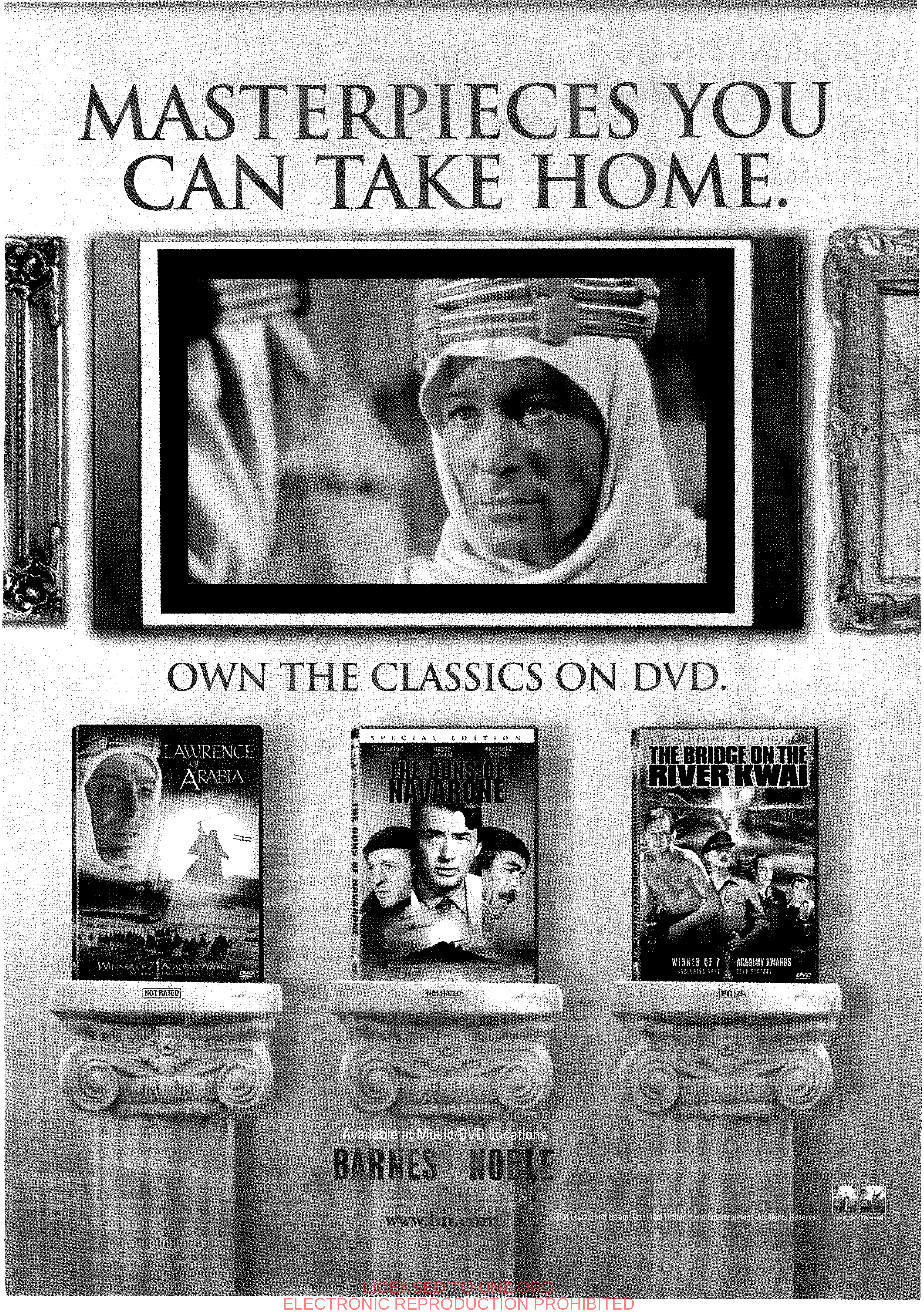
Proposition 71 would invest three billion dollars in research over the next decade—a huge undertaking for California taxpayers.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Critics of embryonic-stem-cell research often accuse its supporters of promising imminent cures that are at best years away, if feasible at all. Keirstead, whose tanned skin, wavy, sun-streaked hair, and stylish suit hardly suggested a specialist in the study of spinal-cord injuries or days spent in subterranean quarters at the University of California at Irvine with hundreds of caged animals, showed a video in which he attempted to counter such charges. In one scene, a small gray rat struggles to move forward, dragging itself by its front paws. The next scene, Keirstead explained, would show a rat that had suffered the same spinal-cord injury but had received a transplantation of human embryonic cells that had been directed to differentiate into oligodendrocytes, a particular type of brain cell. As Keirstead had told me earlier, the very quality that epitomizes the promise of embryonic stem cells—their amazing plasticity—can also be their great failing (“Just stuff stem cells into a brain lesion with a scar, and the cells will make scar tissue”). He had succeeded, he said, in promoting the differentiation of the stem cells into precisely what he wanted—oligodendrocytes, in high purity. And, in the next clip, the rat appears—walking! Its tail lifted! Keirstead predicted that sometime in 2006 there would be a clinical study involving humans with spinal-cord injuries.

Scientists have studied embryonic stem cells from mice, in culture, for decades, but it was only six years ago that James Thomson, a researcher at the University of Wisconsin, was able to isolate and maintain human embryonic stem cells in a similar way. Some of the hope currently fixed on these cells is based on the far more extensive history of adult stem cells, which are found in fetuses, umbilical-cord blood, children, and adults. Hematopoietic stem cells, for example—the blood-forming cells found mainly in the bone marrow, and discovered about forty years ago—were the first stem cells to be used successfully in blood-disorder and cancer therapies, such as bone-marrow transplants. Some researchers believe they may have the potential for more wide-ranging treatments. But adult stem cells are present only in minute quantities in the body, they are difficult to isolate successfully, and—thus far—it has been nearly impossible to grow them outside the body.

Embryonic stem cells, however, are capable of becoming almost any type of cell or tissue, and they are self-renewing,



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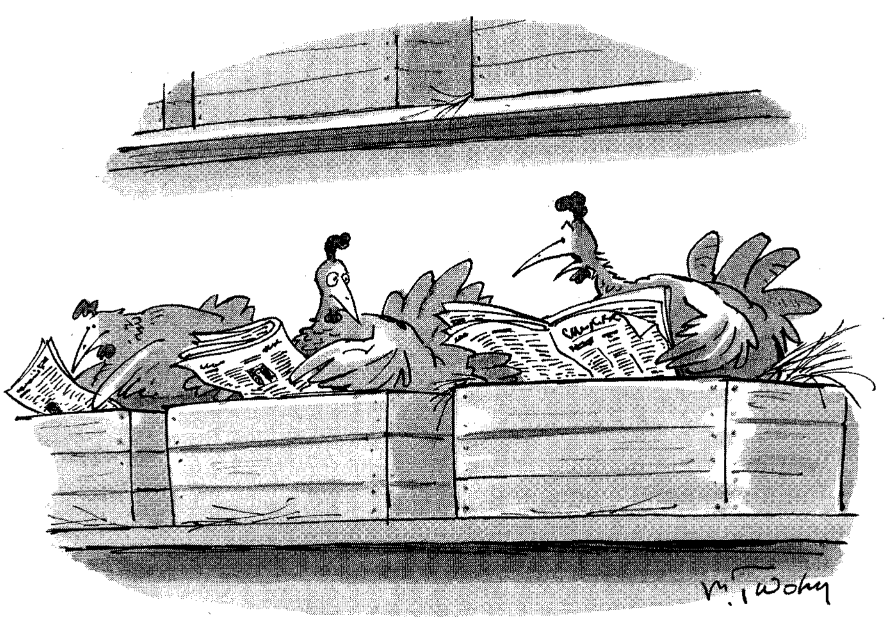
whether in the body or in the laboratory. They are found in embryos about five days after fertilization, when the embryo becomes a shell called a blastocyst, comprising about two hundred cells; if removed from the blastocyst and placed in a culture dish under the right conditions, these cells become a stem-cell line, which continues to propagate indefinitely in the laboratory, and—scientists believe—can be directed to produce large amounts of tissue. Thus, embryonic stem cells appear to have unique potential to lend themselves to a broad array of disease therapies, creating new healthy tissue to replace damaged or dead tissue, such as pancreatic islet cells for Type 1 diabetes, or various neuronal cells for spinal-cord injuries, A.L.S., and Parkinson's disease.

But the very quality that embodies such promise—the capacity of the stem cells to form any tissue—derives from these cells' representing, if only as a microscopic dot, life's origins. And removing the cells from the blastocyst to create a self-renewing stem line destroys the embryo. The Catholic Church and some other religious institutions, therefore, oppose embryonic-stem-cell research. And in August, 2001, President Bush announced that he would allow federal funding only for research on embryonic-stem-cell lines already cultivated in laboratories, and he prohibited funding for the development of new lines, which would require the destruction of additional embryos.

This fractious conflation of science, religion, and politics had brought a dramatic cast of characters to the San Diego hearing room. The president of the "No on Prop 71" campaign, an emotive physician named Vincent Fortanasce, reviled embryonic-stem-cell research as something that would cause far more disease than it cured, since under certain conditions embryonic stem cells can give rise to tumors. He also swore that its technology would lead inevitably to the cloning of human beings. "This is what we would call a clone-and-kill bill!" he exclaimed. "It will make California the mecca of cloning and irresponsible medicine . . . and keep us in budgetary crisis for twenty-five years!"

Although Fortanasce is a devout Catholic, he did not make a pro-life argument. He and other opponents of Prop 71 emphasize that their coalition includes fiscal conservatives and pro-choice feminists; their lead lobbying group is called Doctors, Patients, and Taxpayers for Fiscal Responsibility. But I had interviewed Dr. Fortanasce a couple of weeks earlier, and he told me, "If you want to know who is organizing this, it is the Catholic Conference. I wouldn't want you to find that out later and feel I'd misled you."

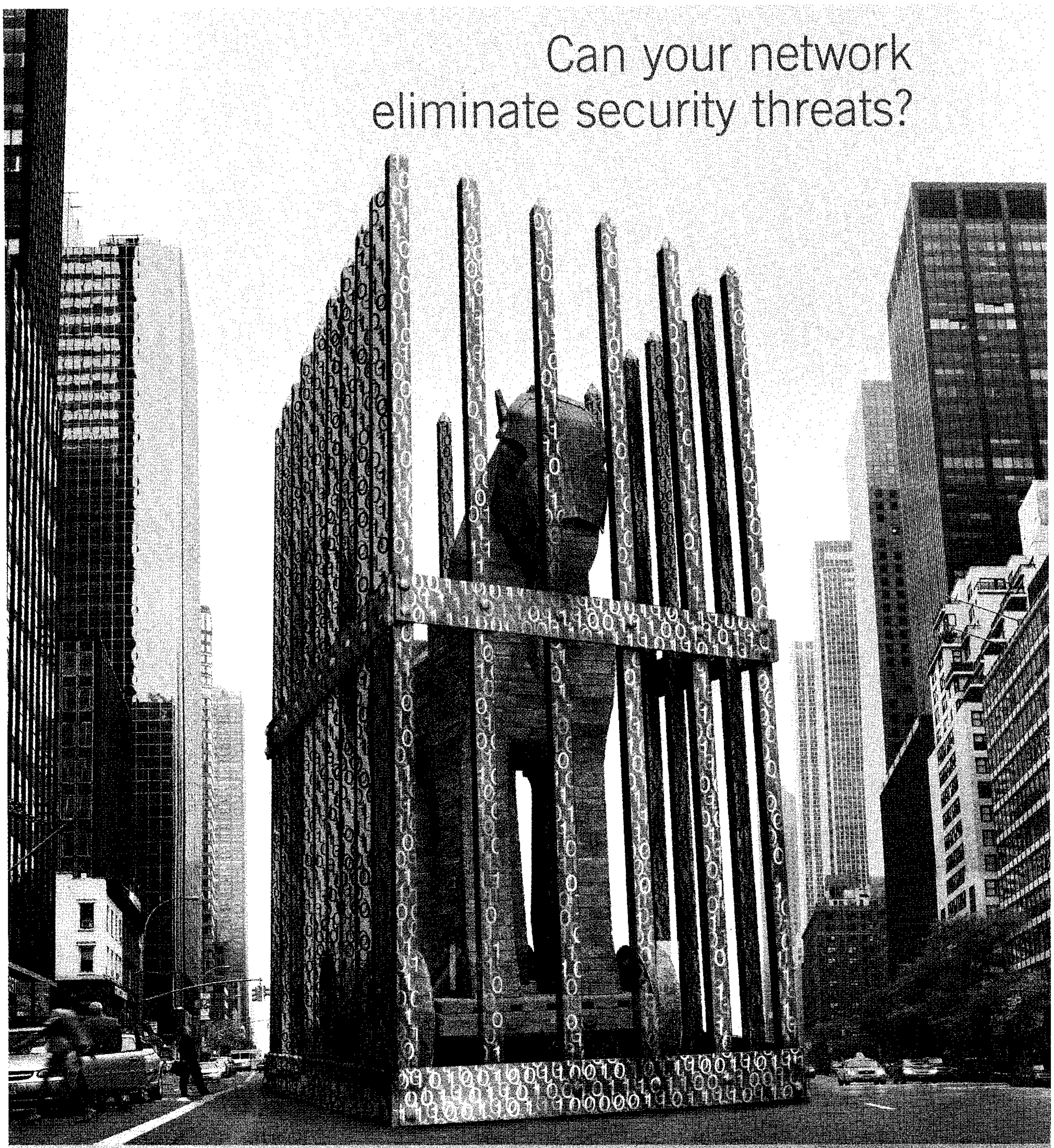
Fortanasce was followed by the feminist Diane Beeson, a sociology professor, who said she fears the initiative will result in poor women being encouraged to sell their eggs for research, and that the technology will be used not only for disease therapies but also for cosmetic surgery and "made-to-order children." Every witness, pro or con, had strong convictions. Mothers pleaded for the proposition's passage, as their brain-damaged children sat beside them in wheelchairs. A cancer survivor said that the initiative ought to emphasize research on adult stem cells, which had helped him, rather than embryonic stem cells. A woman representing the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program said that the excess embryos in in-vitro-fertilization clinics—most of which are slated for destruction if not given to research—ought to be adopted instead. A man from an organization called Biblical Family Advocates said that even if Prop 71 resulted in cures for diseases, neither he nor any member of his family would accept them. "Some say it's just a blob of cells," he declared. "Jesus made it very clear, when you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me." The hearing was by turns heart-wrenching, provocative, and inspiring, but more than anything else it revealed what an odd, ill-suited process this was for deciding a complex and momentous matter of public policy.



"It's all roadkill, and never a word about the chickens who get to the other side!"

For many decades, decisions about federal funding of scientific research have been made at the National Institutes of Health (N.I.H.), the world's leading medical-research institution, which awards more than forty thousand research grants each year to scientists across the country. An agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, the N.I.H. is beholden to the executive branch and to Congress, which influences its research agenda. This relationship has been particularly salubrious in the past several years; the N.I.H. budget has doubled since 1998, going from $13.6 billion that year to $27.3 billion in 2003. Last year, the N.I.H. spent $190.7 million on human-adult-stem-cell research, which is not controversial, and $24.8 million on embryonic-stem-cell research.

Since 1996, a congressional ban has prohibited the use of federal funds to create, damage, or destroy human embryos for research. But after Thomson's breakthrough in isolating the human embryonic stem cells, in 1998, the Clinton Administration's N.I.H. found a way around the ban. Because stem cells were not embryos, N.I.H. lawyers concluded that the



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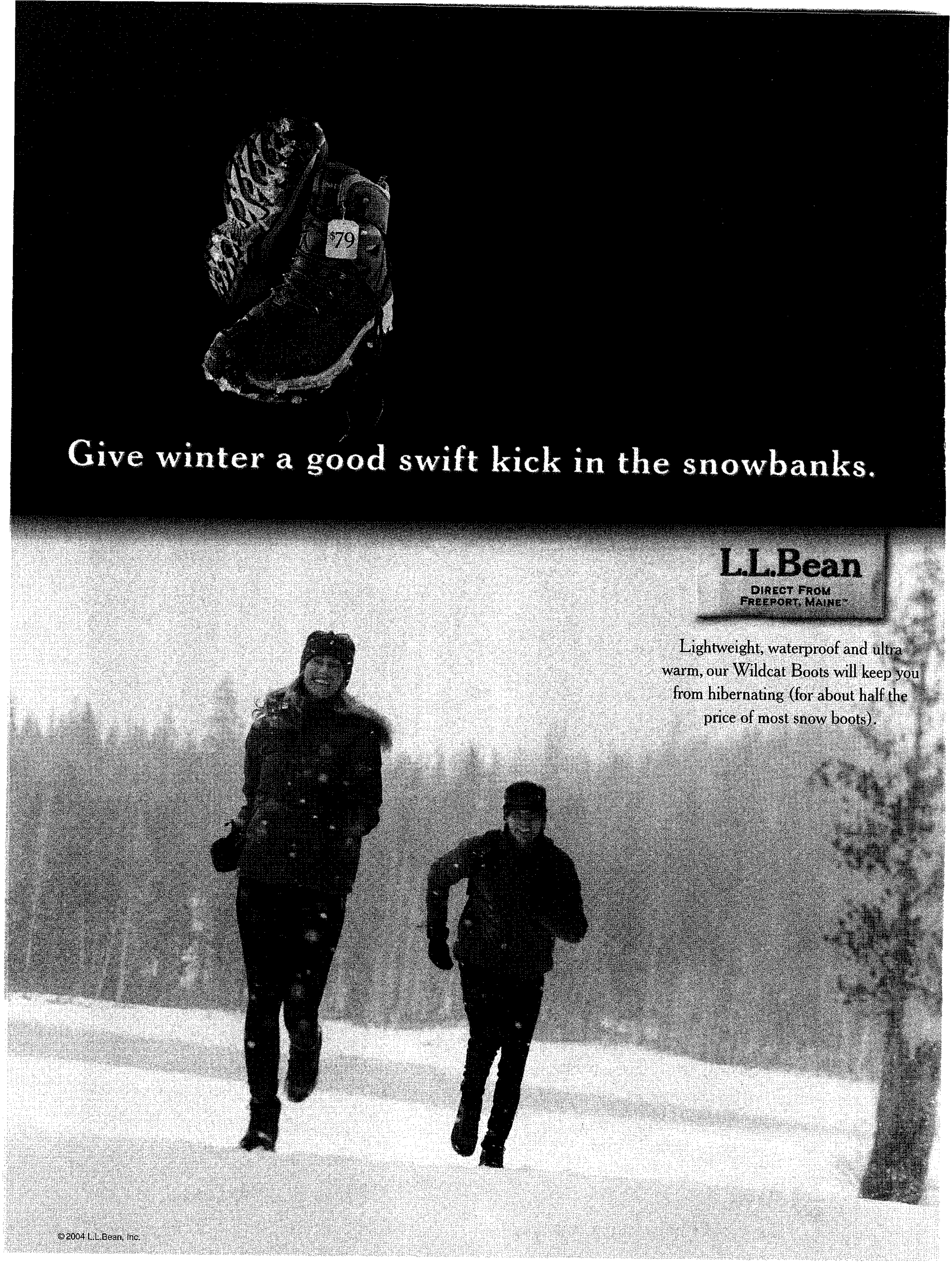

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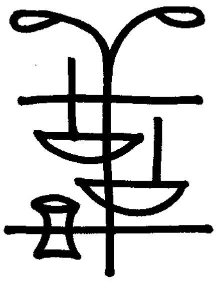
law did not apply. Therefore federal funding could be used for research involving embryonic stem cells but not for creating them (the process that destroys the embryo would have to be privately funded). A group was convened to produce a set of ethical guidelines for the research, and Paul Berg, a Nobel laureate, served as a consultant. Berg had been in the vortex of politics and science before. In 1974, when he and his colleagues discovered how to engineer recombinant DNA, it provoked fears of rampant super-microbes that might be created by some errant laboratory; Berg was instrumental in drawing up the strict regulations that have allowed such DNA research to flourish.

While the risks of recombinant-DNA research had seemed frightening at the time, Berg told me recently, the benefits were still theoretical. "There was nothing that anybody had made yet—nobody had made insulin, nobody had made erythropoietin, nobody had made interferons—but we all understood that the promise existed," Berg said. "The N.I.H. jumped in with both feet, hands, head, everything, and funded this research and enabled it to move forward aggressively—that's why we got all the biotechnology benefits of insulin within two or three years.

"Nonscientists find it very difficult to grasp that once you initiate a technology breakthrough—particularly if it's fundamental and provides what we call a platform technology—the world out there is waiting for a chance to exploit that. You let loose a new idea, a new technology, everybody runs with it—and what you find is there are a lot of very smart people out there. And they find things that the initial discoverers never conceived of."

By the time the Clinton Administration had finished building the foundation for the N.I.H. to fund embryonic-stem-cell research, the 2000 Presidential campaign season had begun, and "there was too much anxiety about the election to move forward," a former N.I.H. official said. During the campaign, Bush said he was opposed to embryonic-stem-cell research; once he was elected, many in the scientific and patient-advocacy communities expected him to ban funding for it altogether. So when he announced, in August, 2001, that federal funding could continue on the already existing stem-cell lines, which would not entail the creation and destruction of embryos, Berg and his colleagues were somewhat relieved. Private and state funding of stem-cell research could continue, and federal funding could, too, on what Bush said were "more than sixty" existing lines.

But the scientists were also perplexed. They knew of only about five lines, at the University of Wisconsin. "What turns out is that most are useless," Berg said. "Most were not cell lines. A cell line is something that is self-renewing, that you can perpetuate indefinitely. These were things where people had just taken a blastocyst, cracked it open, harvested some cells, put them in the deep freeze. The number was reached almost overnight." Today, James Battey, who has been head of the Stem Cell Task Force at the N.I.H. since mid-2002, says that there are twenty-two lines available for government-approved research. Asked how Bush's "more than sixty" was arrived at, Battey said, "I have no idea." He also acknowledged that the lines have other shortcomings—for example, they offer little genetic diversity. They have all come from excess embryos at in-vitro-fertilization clinics, where patients are typically white and affluent.

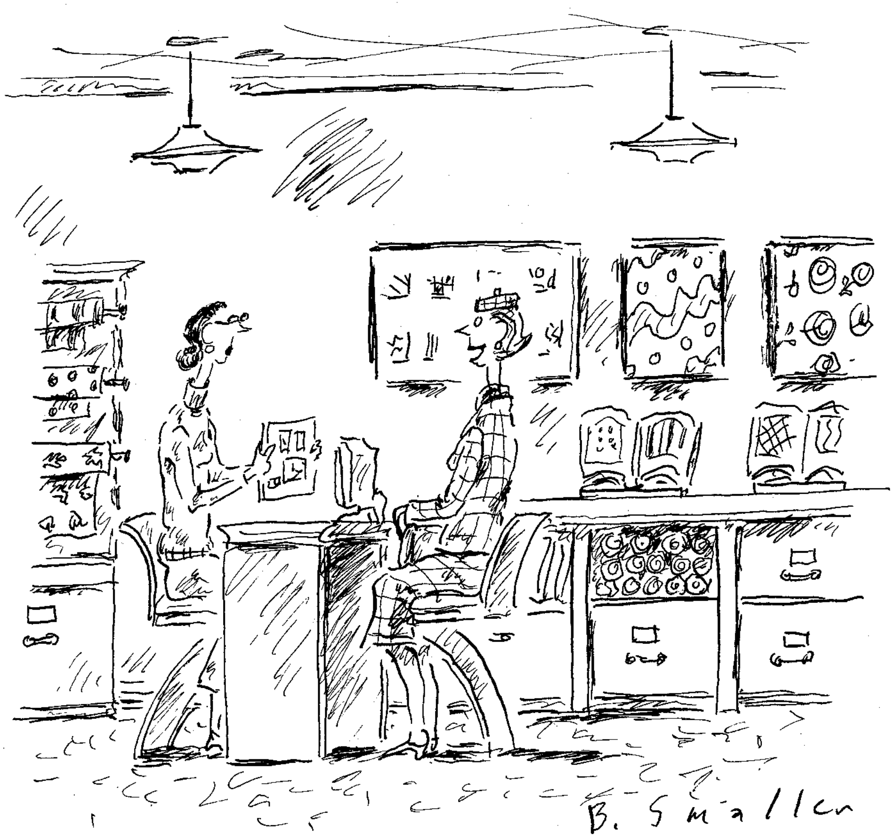


About a week before President Bush's announcement, a bill that he supported, known as the Weldon bill, after Representative David Weldon, of Florida, passed in the House. A similar bill was introduced in the Senate by Sam Brownback, Republican of Kansas. The bills would ban all human cloning—not only reproductive but also therapeutic. Reproductive cloning, if it could be done successfully, would result in the creation of a cloned human. A 2002 report by the National Academy of Sciences concluded that, based on the high rate of abnormalities in cloned animals, human cloning is both dangerous and likely to fail; therefore, without even reaching broader ethical issues, the panel called for a legally enforceable ban. The same panel, however, came to a different conclusion about somatic-cell nuclear transfer, also known as therapeutic cloning (this, too, was only theoretical until early this year, when it was done successfully in a study in South Korea). In both processes, a nucleus from a cell is inserted into an egg from which the nucleus has been removed, and the egg takes on that cell's genetic characteristics. In reproductive cloning, the egg becomes a blastocyst that would be inserted into a woman's uterus and, in theory, grow to be a baby that would be a near-genetic copy of its donor. In therapeutic cloning, the egg becomes a blastocyst that contains the primitive stem cells; those are removed—a process that destroys the blastocyst—and the stem-cell lines are created. The characteristics of those lines, of course, depend on the cell nucleus the researchers injected. If their aim was to improve on the limited, government-approved lines by better representing the genetic diversity of the American public, they might have inserted skin-cell DNA from African-Americans, American Indians, Asians, and so forth. If they wanted to facilitate the study of genetic diseases, they would have injected a disease nucleus and then watched how the disease develops in the stem-cell line. And if they wanted to create stem-cell lines that would be genetically compatible with patients, so that the lines could be used to develop tissues or organs to replace those that were lost or damaged, they would inject a skin-cell nucleus from the patient.

The Weldon and Brownback legislation would make all these activities criminal, with penalties of up to ten years in prison and a million-dollar fine. Moreover, an American who goes abroad for a therapy derived from this process could be subject to these penalties on returning to the United States.

In my conversation with Berg, he said, "Congress is saying, 'We're prepared to deny two hundred and ninety million people in this country access to a therapy that could be lifesaving, because we're offended by the technology.'" He paused, as though he hardly knew how to respond to something so outrageous. "It's what I call un-American, to even think in those terms!" He added that the threat of such legislation, combined with the constraints imposed by President Bush, had discouraged young scientists from entering the field.

In an effort to defeat the Brownback bill, two prominent Hollywood couples formed an organization they called Cures Now. Both couples—Lucy Fisher and Doug Wick, and Janet and Jerry



"I said to myself, 'Maybe I can't change the world, but I can remodel my bathroom.' "

• •

Zucker—had children who had been diagnosed with Type 1 juvenile diabetes. At the time, Tessa Wick was eight years old, and Katie Zucker was eleven. Their parents became active in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (J.D.R.F.), a patient-advocacy group comprising mainly Type 1 diabetes families, and they learned that the best hope for a cure lay in stem-cell research. In Type 1 diabetes, the body attacks its own beta cells, which regulate blood-sugar levels; if those cells could be restored, the disease could be cured.

The J.D.R.F. distributes about a hundred million dollars annually to research. While it has funded embryonic-stem-cell research for the past several years, it has yet to fund any research that involves therapeutic cloning. Its chief executive, Peter Van Etten, explained that it is important to many J.D.R.F. supporters that the stem-cell research is done on excess embryos from in-vitro-fertilization clinics, which would likely be discarded. But in therapeutic cloning one is essentially creating an embryo—or, at least, a manipulated egg—for research purposes. The J.D.R.F., which carefully cultivates relations on Capitol Hill, chose not to fight Brownback.

Therapeutic cloning is, indeed, a line that many do not wish to cross. The columnist Charles Krauthammer, who sits on the President's Council on Bioethics, stresses that he does not believe that personhood begins at conception, believes in legalized abortion, and supports stem-cell research on leftover embryos from in-vitro-fertilization clinics. But he opposes creating an embryo for experimental use and destruction. Essentially, his is a slippery-slope argument: "Violate the blastocyst today and every day, and the practice will inure you to violating the fetus or even the infant tomorrow," he wrote in *The New Republic*.

"Everybody said you can't beat Brownback," Janet Zucker recalled, when I spoke with her and her husband in September. "They felt you don't want to turn off the Administration when they're taking little steps forward"—by not banning federal funding altogether. "But one step forward is not good enough for us, because our kids have a ticking time clock." "What has us scared to death," Jerry Zucker picked up, "are the down-the-line implications—loss of sight, loss of limbs. As a parent, you can't just wait, hoping other people do something to find a cure for your daughter."

The Zuckers and Fisher and Wick began holding fund-raising dinners at their homes (where Nobel laureates held forth for the movie crowd) and shuttling back and forth to Washington. The fact that Wick's movie "Gladiator" had become a blockbuster and won an Academy Award increased his cachet among some politicians; Zucker, for his part, had co-directed "Airplane!" and directed "Ghost." Wick's father, Charles Wick, was the head of the U.S. Information Agency under the Reagan Administration, and the Reagan and Wick families have been close for decades. Nancy Reagan, who had attended one of the scientific-briefing dinners at Fisher and Wick's house, called many Republican members of Congress and told them how important she believed embryonic-stem-cell research was. And Doug's father called Karl Rove and asked him to meet with them. "He was one of our first stops," Fisher said. "He said two things. First, how it would be really bad if you got people's hopes up. And then he said, Well, it would lose this many votes, gain this many. It was just a political calculation. I think he thought we'd go away. But he didn't understand. If you're a parent of a sick child, you're never going away."

Senator Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, came out against the Brownback bill, arguing that, as a pro-life advocate, he differentiated between an embryo in a petri dish and a fetus in its mother's womb. With Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Edward Kennedy, Hatch and his Republican colleague Arlen Specter introduced a bill that would ban reproductive cloning but allow therapeutic cloning. In the end, neither their legislation nor Brownback's had the necessary votes.

In September, 2002, the California legislature passed a bill allowing therapeutic cloning, and Governor Gray Davis signed it into law. It meant, in effect, that California was a haven for embryonic-stem-cell research—but it remained unfunded. State Senator Deborah Ortiz,

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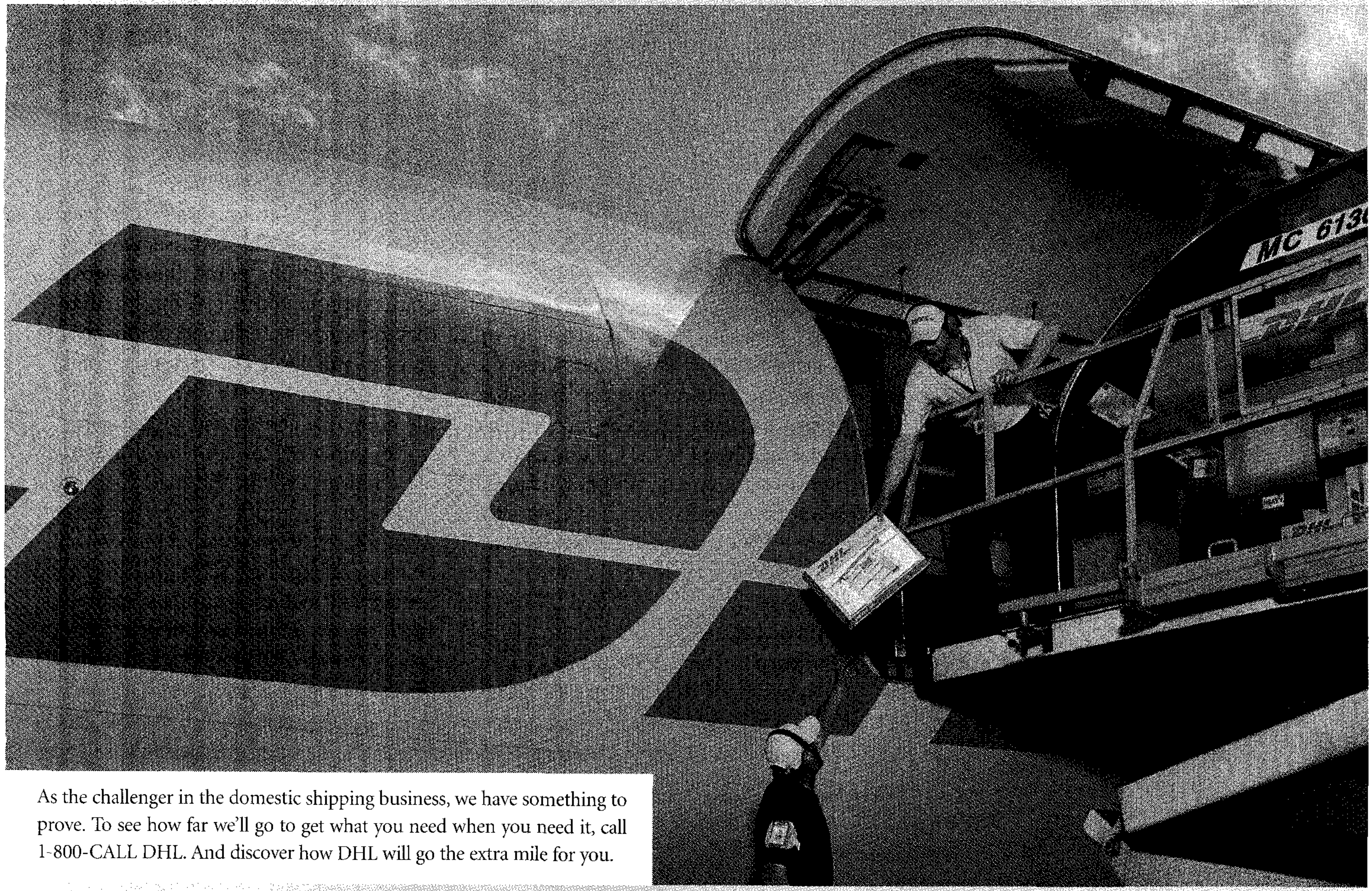

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who had sponsored the stem-cell measure, next introduced a billion-dollar bond measure to fund the research, but it was blocked. She began to consider using the initiative process—California's powerful vehicle for circumventing the legislature and going directly to the people to make public policy—and met with Cures Now in the spring of 2003. When Peter Van Etten, of the J.D.R.F., heard about the initiative idea, he immediately contacted one of his board members, Bob Klein, a real-estate developer from Palo Alto who had a child with juvenile diabetes. The previous year, supplemental funding for diabetes research at the N.I.H. had been about to expire, and the only way to get an extension was with the unanimous consent of the five hundred and thirty-five members in both houses of Congress. With Klein's help, Van Etten and a few others had obtained one and a half billion dollars in funding.

Klein, a lean, fit-looking man of fifty-nine, quickly took control of the Prop 71 effort. He decided that the money should be raised by bonds issued in the amount of not one billion but three billion dollars—a sum that even Irving Weissman, the Stanford University School of Medicine professor and stem-cell researcher who is one of the initiative's major backers, acknowledged he at first found "shocking." But Klein argues that one billion would not support what he has devised: a ten-to-thirteen-year program, moving from basic applied research to clinical trials to therapy development. This is what it will take, he said, "if you want to run a substitute national program." He tried to put it in perspective: The N.I.H. is spending a hundred and ninety million dollars a year on adult-stem-cell research that, he said, may benefit victims of eight to twelve diseases. "We're addressing potential benefit to seventy diseases and injuries with two hundred and fifty million dollars a year," he said. Then he took a slightly different tack. "Am I going to tell two-thirds of the diseases that I'm not going to address their issues?"

Having created this towering financial hurdle, Klein tried to design the initiative to meet it. To do so, he relied on the usual California economics: pushing debt obligations off into the future. For at least the first five years, the measure would demand little of the state; the repayment of the bonds' principal would be postponed, and the interest on the debt would be repaid using bond proceeds. After that, however, payments—a total of approximately six billion dollars, with principal and interest—would come from the state's general fund. Klein argues that the debt could be repaid by revenues generated by patents, royalties, and license fees from the research; he likes to say that, unlike most bond measures, which finance things like construction of schools and roads, these bonds will give the state an "upside." He predicts that the state's spiralling health-care costs will diminish because of the therapies and cures developed; that the California biotech industry will seize the opportunity to become the world leader in this area of research, rather than abdicating its role to the countries that are now investing in it (Britain, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Sweden, and Israel); and that this, in turn, will result in more jobs and a gain in taxable income. After reviewing these arguments, the state Legislative Analyst's Office concluded, pointedly, "The likelihood and magnitude of these and other potential indirect fiscal effects are unknown."

Klein also crafted the initiative with an eye to preventing any future state or federal intervention. "One of our goals," his mantra goes, "is to take politics out of medicine." The result, however, is that three billion dollars of public money will be entrusted to an entity that is remarkably autonomous and insular. The initiative's core clauses are to be incorporated as an amendment to the California Constitution, creating a constitutional right to conduct stem-cell research in California. There is little opportunity for legislative oversight. Neither the governor nor the legislature can stop the research's annual funding, or appropriate the funds for other purposes. A newly created California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, which is to award the research grants, would be governed by a twenty-nine-member board, consisting of representatives of universities, medical-research institutions, and patient-advocacy groups; some would be appointed by various state officials, including the governor, the treasurer, and the controller.

Ideological opponents have exploited the initiative's structure by reaching beyond their base with more mainstream arguments. As Carol Hogan, a spokesperson for the Catholic Conference, said, "Once we saw the initiative—it makes me think of that Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem, 'Let me count the ways'—there is so much to hate about it! So many things, from a public-policy point of view."

Even Ortiz, a strong supporter, emphasized that Prop 71 involved a great deal of public money, and said that she is troubled by the initiative's lack of allowance for legislative oversight and greater accountability. How will the deals be struck about the provisions for the state's obtaining royalties? How will decisions be made about which diseases receive the greatest resources? Ortiz pointed out that there is a prevalence of Type 1 diabetes, for example, in the families of Prop 71's biggest backers. Will Type 1 diabetes receive a disproportionate amount of research funding? And there is an almost palpable gold-rush excitement among some of the scientists who have signed on. At one point, the initiative's drafters considered a provision specifying that the scientists making decisions about grant awards should be from out of state, but it did not make the final cut. Indeed, the more one ventures into the Prop 71 world, the more one appreciates the role played historically by the N.I.H.

The most important of the initiative's twenty-nine board members will be the chairperson, who will manage the agenda, including approval of grants and loans; guide the institute's financing; deal with the California legislature and the U.S. Congress; lead negotiations for intellectual-property agreements; and more. The chairperson's qualifications are enumerated in detail in the initiative. When I pointed out to Klein that these conformed to a remarkable degree with his own résumé, he did not demur. "I have to get back to earning a living," he said. "But if the board believed that for a limited period of time, eighteen to twenty-four months, I should be chair-

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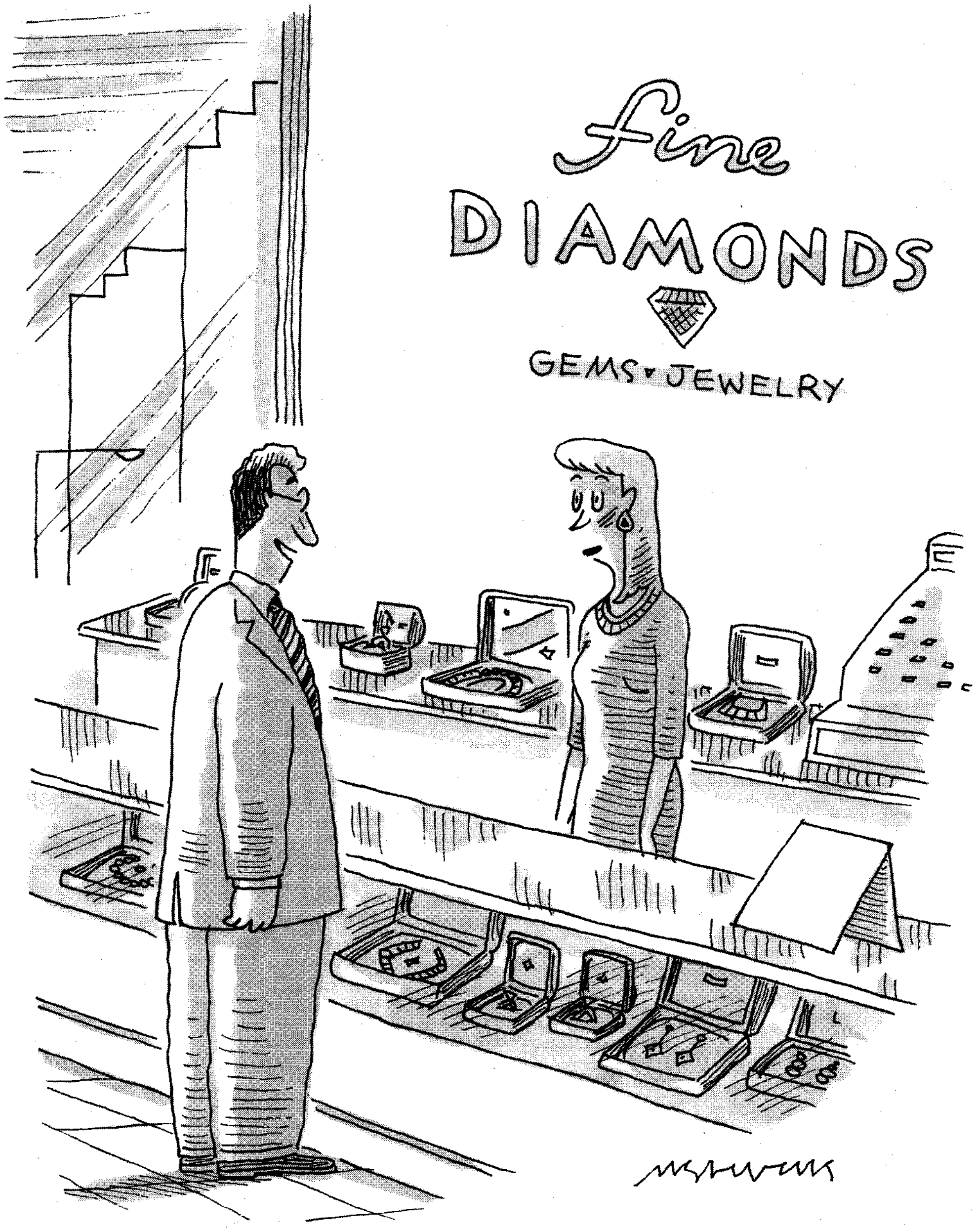
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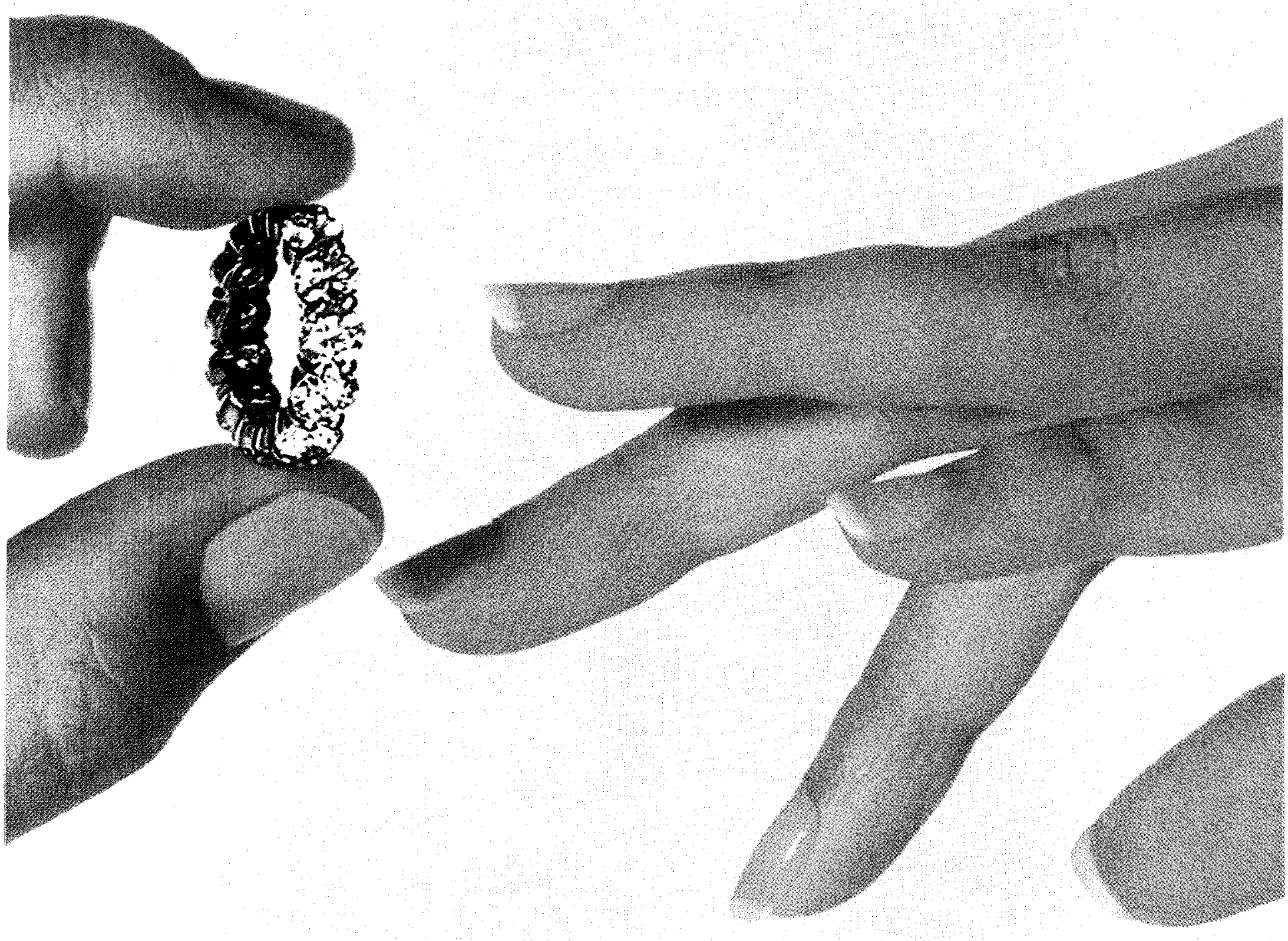

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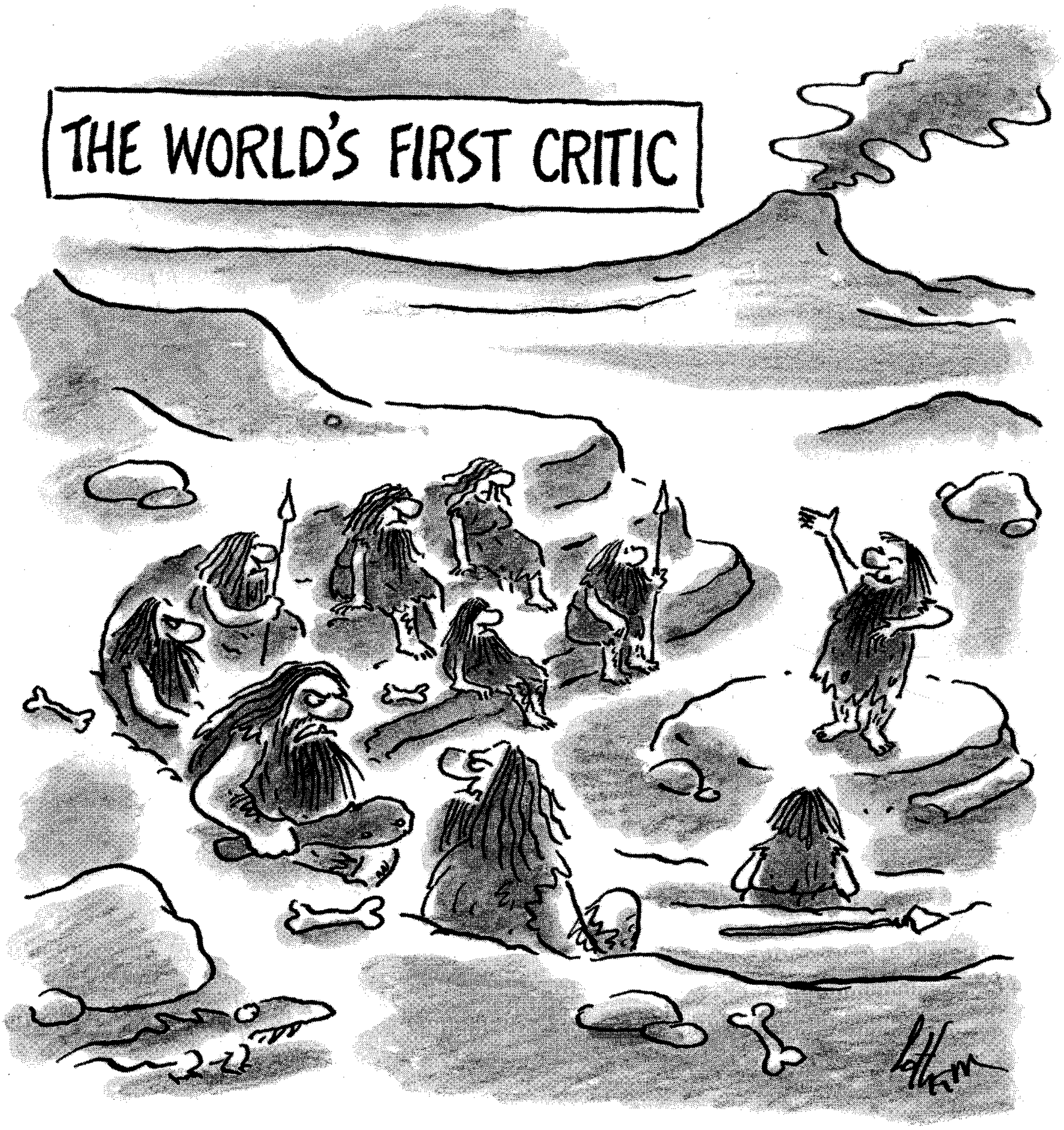
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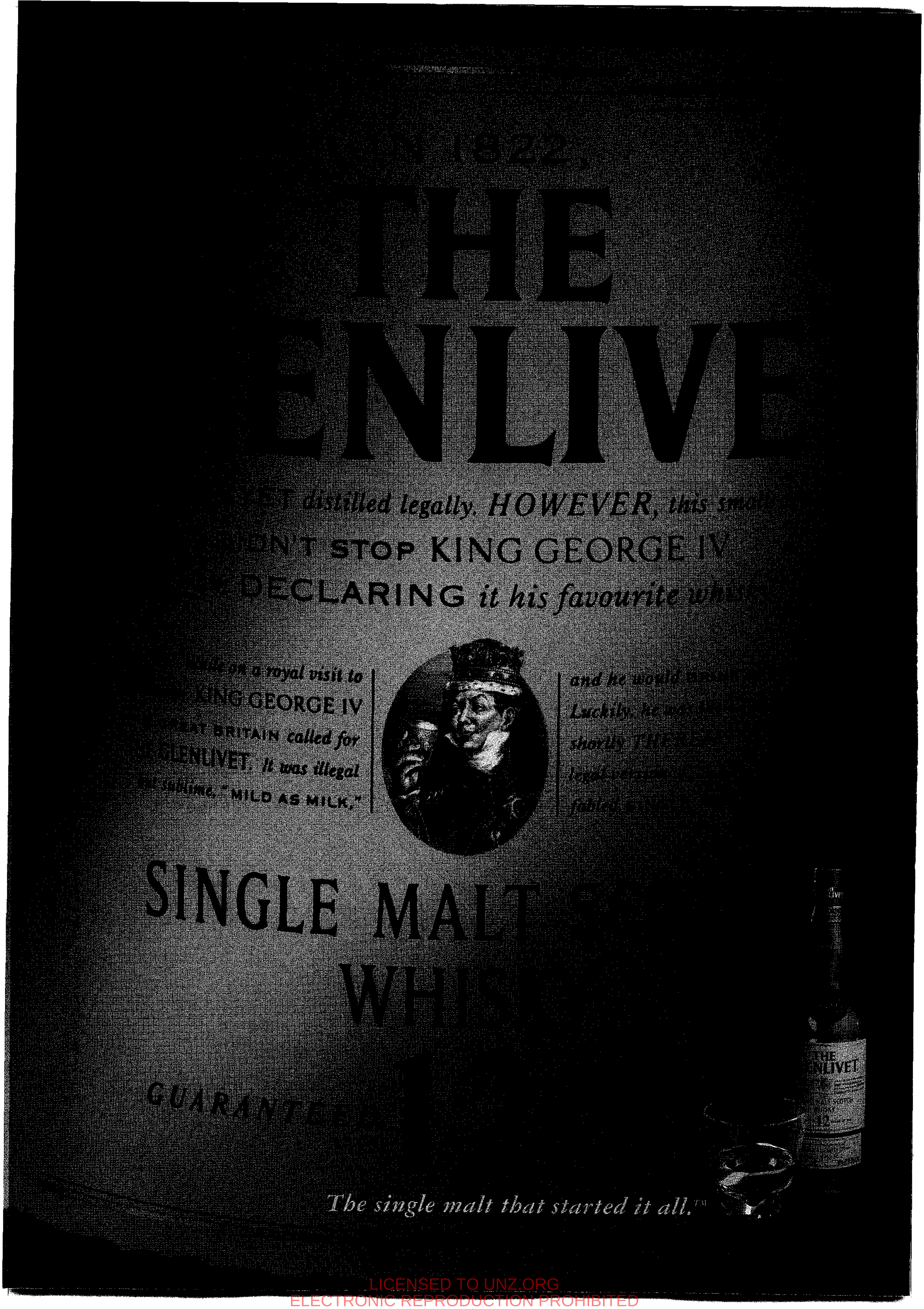
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person, then I would, if I could afford it.”

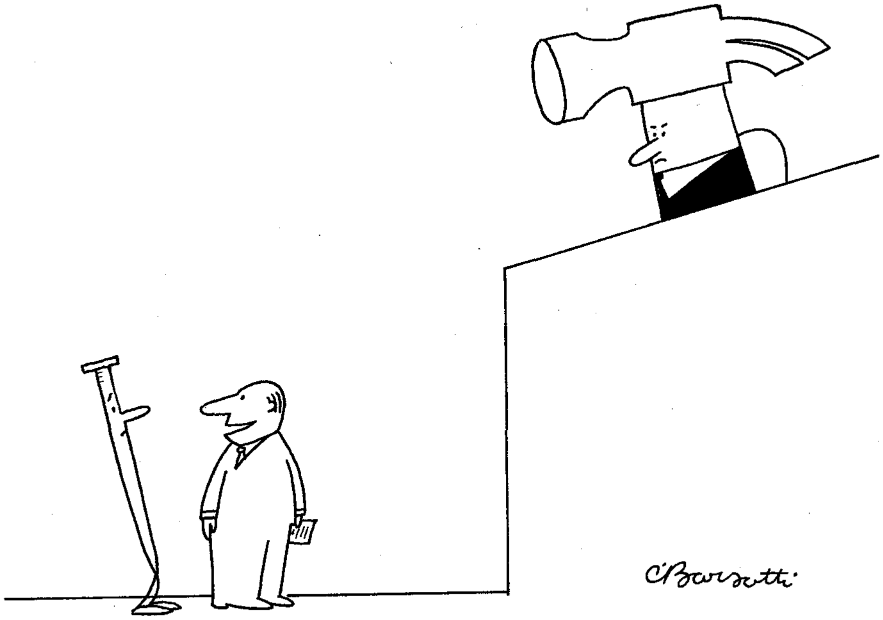
Klein has run this campaign almost as though he were running for office—and, in a way, perhaps he has been. Having set a goal of twenty million dollars for an ad campaign on radio and television, Klein has received substantial contributions from Microsoft's Bill Gates; the eBay co-founders, Pierre and Pam Omidyar; the Amgen founder, William Bowes, Jr.; Senator Jon Corzine, of New Jersey; and others. Klein himself has contributed more than two million. He has secured one million in funding from the J.D.R.F.—the first time that the foundation has contributed to a state-initiative campaign. He has gone to Fresno to speak to farmworkers. He has addressed newspapers' editorial-board meetings, and chambers of commerce throughout the state. He has helped raise money and won important allies, like State Controller Steve Westly and Treasurer Philip Angelides, both of whom have endorsed the initiative. And he has paid attention to those who will implement the initiative—and who have a vested interest in presenting its best case to the public.

Hans Keirstead, the spinal-cord-injury researcher, is among the scientists Klein has cultivated. Keirstead is also an entrepreneur; he has started two biotech companies and sold one. He has a collaboration with Geron, the California biotech company that funded the Thomson breakthrough at the University of Wisconsin. Geron is exceptionally aggressive about intellectual property rights, but Keirstead said that his lawyers, after long, arduous negotiations, brokered a deal between U.C. Irvine and Geron. “Geron is an intellectual-property machine,” Keirstead said. “It is the Bill Gates of this world.” Geron provides him with training and cells, and made possible five hundred thousand of the seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars his lab receives annually. Still, he believes the passage of Prop 71 would change his life.

He recalled a phone call from Klein. “Bob said, ‘You're one of about twelve major people. You just may be benefitting from this bill.’ I think he wanted to be sure I was on board,” Keirstead told me. He pointed out that the way Klein has structured the initiative—and is selling it—he needs revenues to be generated by the end of the first five years, when the state must begin making payments on the loans. And if Keirstead's experiments go to clinical trials sometime in 2006, they might conceivably produce revenues by the time the state needs them—depending, of course, on what kind of deal the state was able to strike. Now Keirstead walked through the math. Say, three hundred million a year, of which perhaps fifty million would go into the construction of research facilities; divide twelve—“O.K., even say it's twenty major people, not twelve”—into two hundred and fifty million. “I could get at least ten million,” he concluded. “It would be huge.”

Klein also met with Tom Okarma, a former Stanford professor who is now the chief executive officer of Geron. Okarma told me he would not divulge the details of their discussion, because one of the opposition arguments is that the initiative would be a form of corporate welfare—funding with public money what should be done by private industry. “So Geron can't be waving the Prop 71 flag,” he said, until it passes. All Geron can do now, Okarma continued, “is to let people in California know that this is not crappy science, that it is within reach, that we are a year and a half from putting these cells into people with spinal-cord injuries”—a reference to Keirstead's experiments. Okarma claimed they are also just a few years away from clinical trials for treatments for heart failure and diabetes—and could move faster if they were not so underfunded. Could Geron get money from the institute created by Prop 71? “Sure we could!” Okarma said.

“We really are on the cusp of something so exciting and important that to have to slalom through the course of threatening legislation and a lethargic N.I.H. is mind-boggling,” he continued. He had got a glimpse of the ideology behind the Bush Administration policy in 2001 when he was called to testify about embryonic-stem-cell research before the President's Council on Bioethics; its chair, Dr. Leon Kass, an ethicist from the University of Chicago, now at the American Enterprise Institute, was appointed by Bush that year. In 2002, the Council had voted in favor of recommending a four-year moratorium on therapeutic cloning. (A dissenting vote had been cast by Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, a biochemistry professor at the University of California at San Francisco, who continued to challenge what she thought was the biased nature of Council discussions on subjects such as stem-cell research. Last February, she was effectively dismissed from the Council. She told me that she should have understood from the start that diversity was not desirable; when she was being vetted for the Council in 2001, she was asked whom she had voted for in the 2000 election. As an Australian who had not yet become an American citizen, she responded that she had not voted.) Okarma, for his part, said he was “flabbergasted” at the nature of the conversation among certain Council members: “The metaphor they used to describe human



“Come now, give the system a chance.”

embryonic stem cells was children who are taken from their home, killed, and their organs distributed for transplantation."

Ideology led to the intrusion of politics into science, Okarma said, and now the science has, predictably, become a "political football," with dubious claims made by both sides. He mentioned Nancy Reagan's remarks, shortly before her husband's death, about embryonic stem cells and Alzheimer's. "We don't know enough about Alzheimer's to even think about how to use embryonic stem cells to cure the disease, let alone to reconstruct the brain," he said. On the other side, Okarma continued, ideological opponents of embryonic-stem-cell research have propagated claims about the ability of adult stem cells to transdifferentiate, or mature into another type of tissue, as the pluripotent embryonic cells do. The question is indeed controversial, and there are scientists who believe that adult stem cells may be able to transdifferentiate, but Okarma was having none of it. "They say bone-marrow cells could become liver, heart, brain—we don't need these immoral embryonic stem cells! It's completely specious. Adult stem cells do not transdifferentiate. You plant a turnip, you get a turnip, not a radish."

Stanford's Irv Weissman makes the same argument. Weissman was the first scientist to identify and isolate adult stem cells in any species, and the first to isolate blood-forming stem cells in humans. (He was the co-founder of two companies that perform research with adult stem cells.) Regarding claims about adult stem cells' ability to transdifferentiate, Weissman said, "I wanted that to be true. I mean, first, we actually did discover blood-forming stem cells, so I feel a little of the glory would rub off on me. And also I have a company that has the patent, and a license from Stanford—I could be the richest person on earth! I had every possible motivation to want that to be true. But it's not. Every one of the claims we tracked down turned out not to be true."

I interviewed Weissman in his small, cramped office, where paper cascades from piles on the desk, chairs, and floor, in Stanford's Beckman Center. Two years ago, he was named the head of a new research center at Stanford—the Institute for Cancer and Stem Cell Biology and Medicine—but it is a "virtual" institute, he explained. He has managed to raise about fifteen million dollars to fund it—not enough for a building or for research. If Prop 71 passes, his institute may very well be virtual no longer. (He mentioned, hypothetically, that he might apply for a grant for Stanford for fifty million dollars to build facilities.) He began to describe what he plans to do immediately after a victorious November 2nd. He will pay a visit to a couple of researchers at Harvard whom he considers the best in the field of stem-cell research. "I'm going to say, 'If you come to my new institute at Stanford—a new building, by the way, funded by the state of California—there's going to be thirteen years of funding in your field. Anything that you want to do that would move this field faster toward clinical therapies, you can't do where you are. You'll have great colleagues. You'll be able to do the research, and, by the way, M.I.T. doesn't have a great hospital full of researchers who want to study the diseases that your cell lines will allow them. You'll come here and you'll have collaborators, and, by the way, do you like the winters? Because we don't have those winters.'" Weissman smiled, and his eyes glinted with anticipation. After that, he continued, he will move on to "my friend Harold Varmus's institute"—Sloan-Kettering, in New York. Others in California who also hope to create stem-cell institutes funded by the passage of Prop 71—at the University of California at San Francisco, the University of California at San Diego, the Salk Institute for Biological Science, the California Institute of Technology, the Burnham Institute—will go prospecting, too. "We're going to invade the country for the best, and some will not want to leave, but a lot will. When they leave, those states will be at a competitive disadvantage, and probably only then will the state legislatures and the federal government wake up to realize that California is stealing, for a song, these scientists—and building a whole future."

Compared with Okarma—the chief executive of a public company, responsible to shareholders, which must focus on specific approaches most likely to yield commercial products—Weissman is free to take the long view. He is intent on using nuclear transfer to develop cell lines for every human genetic disorder in an effort to understand how the disorders work, and which genes need to be fixed in order to treat and, ultimately, prevent them. "Is this nuclear transfer the same big platform that recombinant DNA was? In my mind, it certainly is, if not more. Diseases we can't approach now, it would enable us to approach. Therapies that we would spend years and years trying to get to, we can probably short-circuit. One thing I know about biomedical science—once you're onto something, once you get the best and the brightest funded to work on it, things move very, very fast." Last January, he met with James Battey, the N.I.H.'s Stem Cell Task Force head, and the agency's boss, Elias Zerhouni. "I said, 'Look, what if we make a cell line from ten diabetics' "—using the nuclear-transfer, or therapeutic-cloning, process. " 'Can we at least send these cell lines to the N.I.H. labs, full of people who want to study diabetes?' And they said no way. It is not allowed by the President's executive order.

"California has decided to pick up where the federal government has given up its responsibility to further people's health," Weissman continued. "This is a mini-N.I.H., doing what the N.I.H. has failed to do."

When I asked Battey about the N.I.H.'s rejection of Weissman's proposal, he replied, "Right. We couldn't, because Irv would be creating that cell line with cells created after August 9, 2001. So he could do it with private funds, but we couldn't use federal public funds to study it."

Battey acknowledged that there are currently roadblocks that the N.I.H. cannot get past. "So, to be honest, we're working on the ones where there is something we can do, because there's not a lot of point in fuming about the ones

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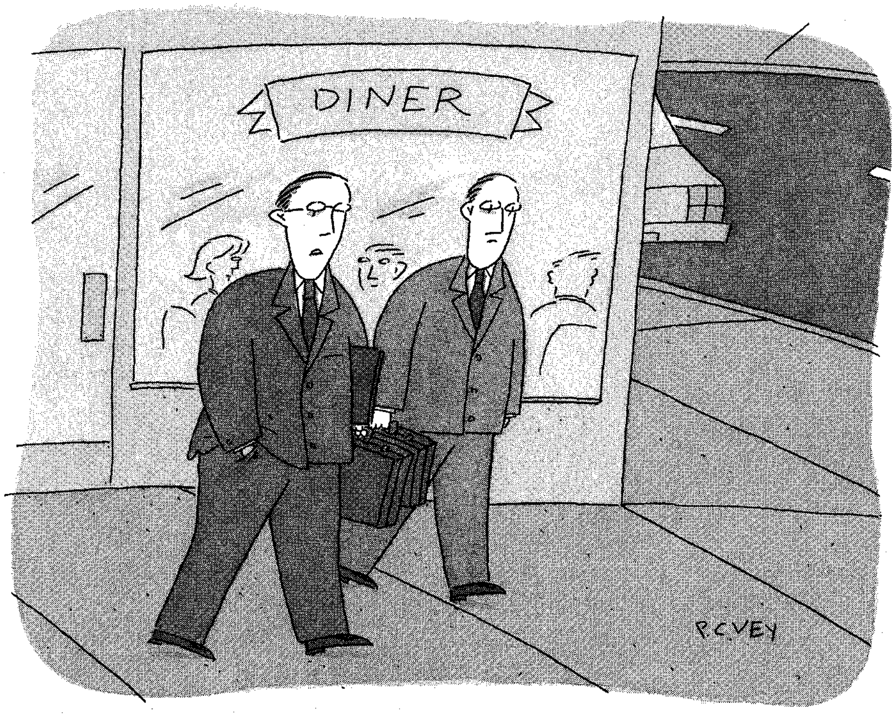


"The blood rushing to your stomach after a full and hearty breakfast is just another sign that the economy is improving."

you can't do, right? That's cursing the darkness, as opposed to lighting a candle.

"We're not policymakers. We inform policymakers," he continued, quietly. "And the policy, of course, is not made solely based upon scientific input."

Battey mentioned that he had trained at Stanford, in a laboratory next to Weissman's, and a close friend of his had worked for Weissman. "Oh, I attended their lab meetings, I went to parties at Irv's house, I know Irv Weissman very well," he continued. "He's articulate, brilliant, visionary. Irv is special. He may be the most accomplished hematopoietic-stem-cell biologist in the world."

And the initiative?

"I'm a very keen follower of it," Battey said. "I think it's very exciting. I must say I'm amazed if the California taxpayer is ready to pony up three billion dollars. But I think such an investment could have a really transforming effect on stem-cell research—and it would certainly make California an extremely attractive place to conduct it."

Harold Varmus, the N.I.H.'s former head, now at Sloan-Kettering, says he, too, is a strong supporter of the initiative. "I think that the symbolic value of having some state doing it with public money, to embarrass the federal government and try to encourage it to get back in the game, would be very, very important. And California is well equipped to do it. But there really is no substitute for the N.I.H. And it's a bad precedent, in a way, to say we'll solve the problems of the N.I.H. by doing this, state by state."

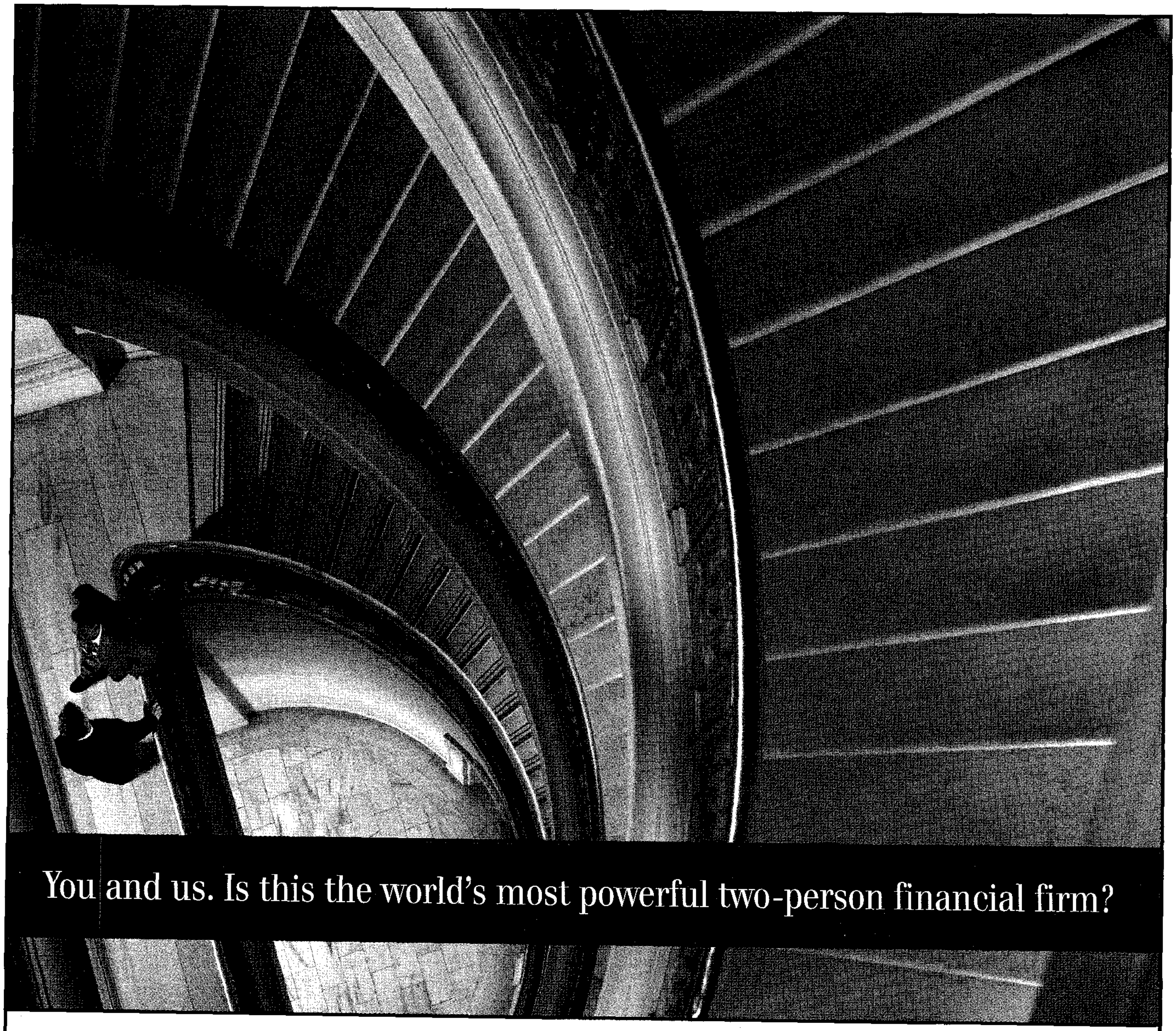
The research program Weissman envisages is "very, very attractive," Varmus concluded. But, more than anything, he wants the federal government to change course and create a level playing field across the country for this research. "I don't want to feel that any of my investigators are now going to want to go to California."

Prop 71, of course, owes its very existence to George W. Bush, but that is the best-kept secret of the initiative's campaign. No radio or television ad will mention Bush. "To win, we need Republican votes," one Prop 71 advocate explained. The higher the visibility of stem-cell research in the Presidential campaign, the more polarizing it becomes—which cuts against Prop 71's campaign message of studious universality. It was, therefore, bad news for the campaign last week when John Kerry brought embryonic-stem-cell research to the fore, charging that Bush's conduct in this area was consistent with his handling of many other issues. "Now we stand at the edge of the next great frontier, but, instead of leading the way, we're stuck on the sidelines," Kerry said, at a town-hall meeting in New Hampshire. "President Bush just doesn't get it. Faced with the facts, he turns away. Time and time again, he's proven that he's stubborn, he's out of touch, he's unwilling to change."

Before Ron Reagan popularized this issue at the Democratic Convention, there was little hint that it might become what Kerry's communications director, Stephanie Cutter, was now calling "the sleeper issue of the campaign." Dr. Jeffrey Bluestone, the director of the Diabetes Center at the University of California at San Francisco, who appears in a Prop 71 television ad, said, "I wonder if it was good for the cause for Ron Reagan to get up at the Democratic Convention. I think it was a double-edged sword—because, early on, embryonic-stem-cell research was not seen as so political, and now it is."

Ron Reagan told me that after his father died he got a call from John Kerry. "He promised me that if he was elected his first act as President would be to sign an executive order reversing Bush's policy on embryonic-stem-cell research." Kerry has said he would not only remove the restrictions on funding of stem-cell lines but also allow funding for therapeutic cloning, and that he would authorize an increase in its N.I.H. funding from the current $24.8 million to a hundred million. Asked whether Nancy Reagan had had reservations about her son's appearing at the Democratic Convention, Reagan said she had not. "She was aware that there would be dust rising—but she recognized the good opportunity it was for the issue she's so passionate about."

About ten days after Ron Reagan made his plea at the Convention for a loosening of the restrictions on stem-cell research—in what was the second-most-watched televised appearance, after Kerry's—Laura Bush, on a rare two-day campaign trip, issued a rebuttal, on the third anniversary of Bush's decision to limit federal funding. "Although you might not know about it from listening to the news lately, the President also looks forward to medical breakthroughs that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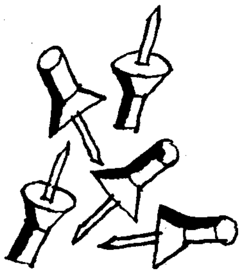
may arise from stem-cell research," she said, during a speech to the Pennsylvania Medical Society. "Few people know that George W. Bush is the only President to ever authorize federal funding for embryonic-stem-cell research." Laura Bush's statement was "technically true," said Jim Battey, of the N.I.H. "But it suggests that there were no plans to do it before him, and that's not true." The Clinton Administration had, of course, gone to great lengths to make far fuller N.I.H. funding possible—but Bush had prevented it. The distortion was, he added, an example of the kind of politicization that has plagued the field—"not necessarily lying but just selecting the facts that serve your own political purpose. And science is not generally well served by that kind of activity." Laura Bush's canard has been repeated by White House aides, in response to Kerry's attacks.

The heightened visibility of the issue in the national race might have a polarizing effect not only on Republican voters in California but also on its Republican governor. Before he ran for governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife, Maria Shriver, went to a dinner at the Zuckers' home, where an enthusiastic Maria plied the scientists with questions and Arnold expressed his support for embryonic-stem-cell research. After Ronald Reagan died, Schwarzenegger said again that he supported the research, but he has not taken a position on the initiative. The California Republican Party has opposed it. Moreover, it was only about nine months ago that Schwarzenegger, campaigning for another bond initiative—one that won on the March ballot, enabling the state to borrow fifteen billion dollars—swore that it was to pay down old debt, and after that there would be "no new debt." "Tear up your credit cards and throw them away!" he had said, ripping up an oversized card. How would he explain his support, on the very next ballot, for assuming another six billion dollars in debt? Prop 71's advocates were told that Schwarzenegger probably could not support the measure and that he would stay neutral; but by late August he was reportedly under pressure from Republicans, both within and outside the state, to oppose it. About a week later, that pressure was said to have been "blunted," possibly by Maria. When I asked Klein about it, he grinned and said, "No comment." He also said that he made "a signal attempt to meet with Maria." In any event, Schwarzenegger's opposition is probably the Prop 71 proponents' greatest fear.

By late September, just as Prop 71's intensive television campaign began, a Los Angeles *Times* poll found that voters supported the measure fifty-four per cent to thirty-two per cent; fourteen per cent said they remained undecided. There was still a wild disparity in funding between the measure's supporters and its opponents. Representatives of the Catholic Conference and the Evangelical Christian Howard Ahmanson, Jr., began organizing the opposition to Prop 71 months ago, but they emerged publicly in their substantial roles only in September, when, records show, the Roman Catholic Church and Ahmanson were the two largest contributors to "No on Prop 71," donating fifty thousand dollars each. The opposition has less than two hundred thousand dollars, in total; the Prop 71 campaign has twenty million. Klein says that he worries about a late outpouring of funds from the Christian right in the campaign's final days; he has put his house on the market and will sell it if the campaign needs last-minute funding.

It is ironic that John Kerry's impassioned advocacy of embryonic-stem-cell research could become an obstacle for its greatest boosters in California—but that's what happens when an issue has to win an election. And, at another level, some of Prop 71's backers might even have mixed emotions about a victory by the man who has sworn to remove the shackles from the N.I.H. California research would still have its pot of gold, but its chances of a near-monopoly on that research would be substantially diminished.



When the kickoff event for the Prop 71 campaign was held at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, on September 21st, the ceremony reflected the organizers' belief that the argument most likely to persuade those who believe in the inviolability of the human embryo is the sight of suffering children and doomed adults. Volunteers held large blue posters before the TV cameras: "Yes on 71—Save Lives with Stem Cells." Bob Klein spoke. "My fourteen-year-old son, Jordan, has juvenile diabetes, and my mother is dying of Alzheimer's," he said. Klein has probably uttered these words hundreds of times in the past eighteen months; each time, he pauses briefly to compose himself. He then recited the growing list of supporters: twenty-two Nobel laureates, more than seventy medical and patient-advocacy organizations, and dozens of business organizations.

A soft-featured, serious-looking girl of thirteen named Emma Klatman stepped to the microphone. "I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when I was seven years old," she said. "Suddenly, I was no longer a naïve young little girl, but a seven-year-old who had to test blood sugars with needles and give myself insulin shots for every morsel of food I ate. This is what I do every day and will have to for the rest of my life, if we do not find a cure. Vote for the cure!" Mark Siegel, a man in his fifties who spoke with some effort, said he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease six years ago. "I look forward to a future of shuffling down the street, not being able to smile the way I used to—eventually, losing control of my limbs." As for a cure, "they say it will take time, maybe five to ten years." He paused, and then said, more strongly and clearly, "I say, let's start the clock running now."

Dustin Hoffman, who had been standing on the small stage with other speakers, told the audience, "It's hard to believe, after listening to Mark and Emma, that we're even debating this. If each of them could be sent to every home in California, it might be their first unanimous vote. Listening to them, the question that appears in one's mind is, do we have to be afflicted to be enlightened?"

Those who believe in the personhood of the embryo, and those who don't but who oppose creating an embryo for research, do not, of course, subscribe to Hoffman's view of enlightenment. The real test of their convictions will come if the hoped-for cures materialize and if it is their loved ones who are afflicted but could be saved. That will be the crucible. ♦

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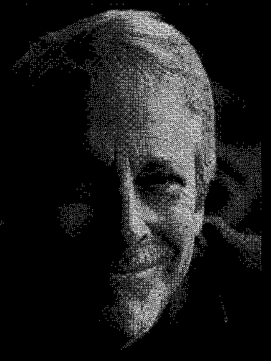
the conversation CIRCLE

GREAT BOOKS GET PEOPLE TALKING.

Author Geoffrey Nunberg, professor of linguistics at Stanford University and frequent contributor on National Public Radio's "Fresh Air," recently chatted about his book "Going Nucular: Language, Politics, and Culture in Confrontational Times," from PublicAffairs Books.

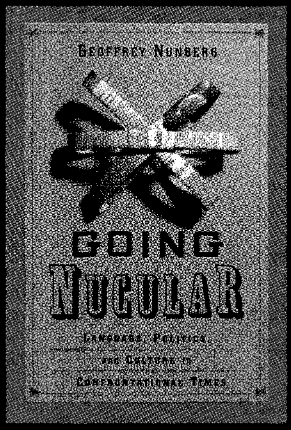
As the heated rhetoric of a typical political campaign reveals, words don't always tell the whole story on first listen. "Going Nucular" is a witty look at what the words that politicians use are really saying—and what they're leaving unsaid.



Is the polarization of the country reflected more in the language than it used to be?
Political discourse is no more polarized or vituperative than it was in 1968 or 1940. But the polemics are more pervasive and self-absorbed. Back then the invective wasn't streamed 24/7 over cable TV and the Internet, and the media didn't parse their own coverage in such lint-picking detail. Journalists didn't count how frequently they were using "liberal" and "conservative."

How do the right and the left play differently with language?
The right specializes in short bromides that begin with "You see"—"You see, they're trying to shake our will." Or it wraps itself in sonorous slogans like "Clear Skies" and "The Ownership Society." Language has been very good to them. The left talks in long sentences that begin with "Well," full of subordinate clauses and wonky jargon like "single-payer." The one makes the world suspiciously simple; the other makes it impenetrably complicated.

What happened to the word "liberal"?
The right branded it as a lifestyle term. The media never talk about "working-class liberals" anymore—nowadays the word's only used for people who can keep themselves in wine and cheese. Actually, it turns out that Republicans buy more Brie than Democrats do.



But it still stands in for the right's image of liberals—soft, pale, and runny. Recently, though, the polls show "liberal" making a comeback, particularly among young people. They are not aware of the troubled history of the word, and they don't know from "progressive," but they get it from the Crips-versus-Bloods rhetoric of the right-wing talk shows. They tune in and say, "What a jerk! I guess that makes me a liberal."

You describe President Bush's mispronunciation of "nuclear" as a calculated move. Does it work?
A lot of people come by "nucular" honestly. But President Bush's dad says it correctly, and so does Jeb. And W certainly didn't get it from his mother. My guess is that it's something he picked up when he went back to Texas after Yale and took to dropping his g's. But even if it began as an affectation, it's second nature by now, like the swagger. He's a self-made bubba.

Some might argue that in light of today's sloppy grammar and jargon the English language is breaking down. Do you agree?
We'll get by. After all, people have been complaining about the breakdown of English for three hundred years. They couldn't all have been right, or we'd be bears today.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION. VISIT WWW.GRANDMARNIERUSA.COM.

Photograph: Marcy Maloy

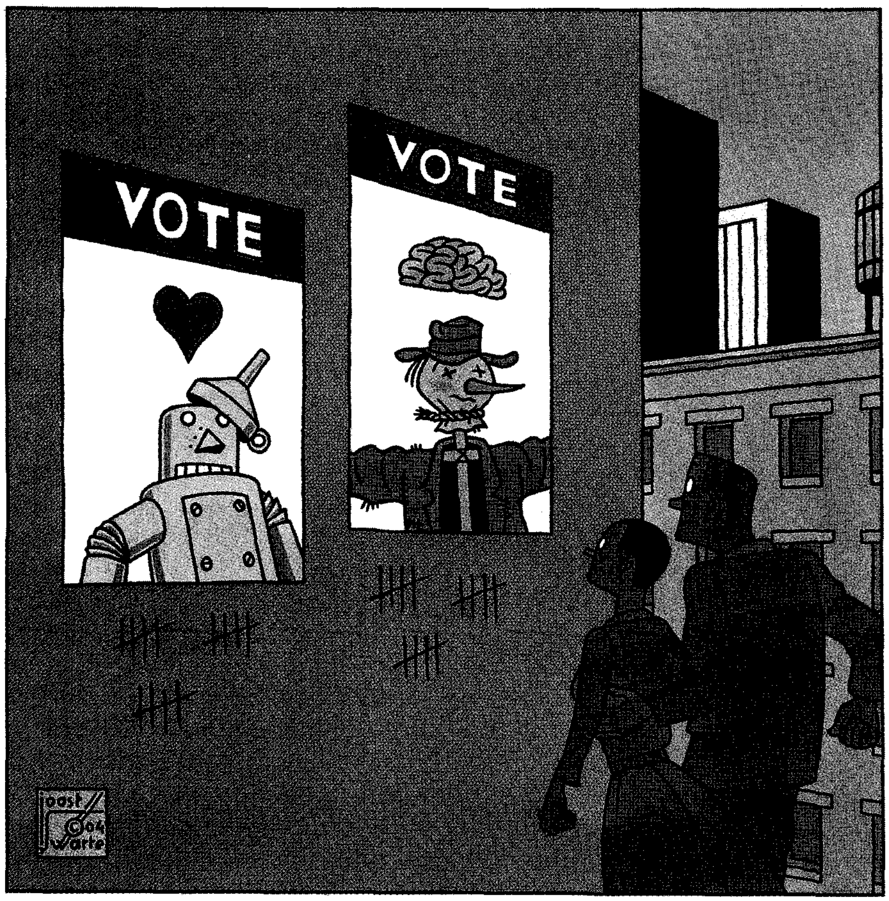
THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE POLLSTER

Does John Zogby know who will win the election?

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

Shortly after his fifty-sixth birthday, several weeks ago, John Zogby, the pollster, could be found at seven-thirty in the evening walking rapidly back and forth among the brightly lit shops in the Copley Place Mall, in Boston, trying vainly to locate the skybridge to the Prudential Center. He had been told to "walk through retail," but, amid the confusing display of stores leading in every direction, he was finding this instruction insufficiently specific. He was dressed up in a tie and jacket, and he walked with his shoulders hunched over and pointed forward, as though he were trying to prevent a cloak from falling off. He seemed, as he usually does, mild, overcaffeinated, inquisitive, watchful, cautiously friendly, somewhat anxious, yet fundamentally optimistic.



"Whom would you vote for?" a 2000 Zogby poll asked. "The Tin Man or the Scarecrow?"

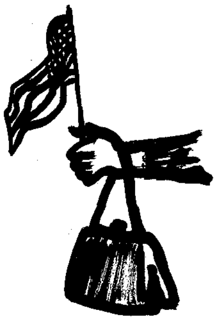
JOOST SWARTE

He had been hired to address the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, one of his polling clients, and worried that he was late, but when he arrived the road builders were still in the middle of a preprandial auction (a bird hunt, a golf getaway), and so, after securing himself a plastic glass of wine and a plateful of cheese cubes, Zogby retreated to a distant table to await the commencement of dinner.

"I can't help but remember the early years," he told the road builders when it was time for him to speak. "One Friday, I was at a happy hour and ran into an old chum from high school. I told him I was a pollster, spread the word. Lo and behold, first thing Monday I got a call from his aunt, and she said, 'You're a pollster?' and I said yes, and she said, 'Well, I have a sofa and a chair.'

"Welcome to the Armageddon election," Zogby said when the laughter had died down. "We have divided ourselves into two equal warring nations. We did a poll last December on this fiction we've created, red states and blue states. It's a pure fiction, because Florida's a red state by a few hundred votes, and New Mexico—a couple of hundred votes made it blue. But listen to what we found. Fifty-four per cent of red-state voters said they attend a place of worship at least once a week—that's a very important conservative voting indicator—thirty-two per cent of blue-state voters said they did. Seventy-five per cent of the reds said they want a President who believes in God, fifty-one per cent of the blues. Fifty-six per cent of red-state voters said they keep a gun, thirty-five per cent of blue-state voters said so. In a blue state, you are seven points more likely to be single, never married, and, let me tell you, we talk about a gender gap in politics, but it's minuscule compared to the married-single gap." In fact, Zogby has since discovered in a poll of women that the gender gap in this election has disappeared altogether. (He also discovered that women pick Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" over Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" by a nearly two-to-one margin as a movie they'd like all Americans to see.) "On most issues married and single voters can be twenty-five or thirty points different, married ones being more conservative," he continued. "So that's the context in which we have this election."

John Zogby has been polling for two decades now, but he made his national reputation eight years ago, after the Clinton-Dole race of 1996. Most pollsters predicted a double-digit victory for Clinton, while Zogby predicted a narrow margin of eight per cent—the actual figure was 8.5 per cent. Zogby's uncanny accuracy, combined with the dramatic failure of the other polls, won him a lot of attention. In 2000, he repeated his performance, being one of only two major pollsters to predict that Gore would win the popular vote. He has had his share of humiliations, too, of course. When Hillary Clinton was deciding whether to run for the Senate in New York, he wrote an Op-Ed piece for the *Times* explaining why she wouldn't win; his final poll predicted a tie, when she actually won by twelve points. Nonetheless, this year he is conducting national election polls for Reuters and the *Wall Street Journal*, and smaller polls for the Miami *Herald* and the Atlanta *Journal-Constitution.* Nor is his ambition confined to the United States: he has polled in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and South America. His group was one of the first to publish survey results from Iraq. Zogby wants to be the Gallup of his generation—the brand name in polling all over the world. Lately, in fact, he has derived some satisfaction from observing the wild vacillations of the Gallup election polls—Bush thirteen points ahead in mid-September, eight points ahead at the end of the month, dead even with Kerry on October 4th—because he finds it implausible that such enormous swings reflect actual changes in public opinion. "I mean, good debate, but it wasn't that good," he says. He concludes that Gallup's polls are less reliable than his own. "Zogby is more volatile, but Zogby polls are less volatile," he says. It's all a matter of technique.



"How do I get a handle on this election or any other?" he asked the road builders. "I asked one question the Saturday before the election in 2000. I called my call center in Utica and said, 'Put this in the poll: "You live in the land of Oz, and the candidates are the Tin Man, who's all brains and no heart, and the Scarecrow, who's all heart and no brains. Who would you vote for?" ' The next day, I called Utica and said, 'Whaddaya got?' They said, 'Well we've got Gore—,' I said, 'I don't care about Gore. What's Oz?' It was 46.2 for the Tin Man and 46.2 for the Scarecrow. It was right there that I knew I wasn't going to know what was going to happen. But I asked this question again two weeks ago and the Tin Man led by ten points."

Utica, New York, where Zogby grew up and now has his headquarters, is a small, depressed, formerly industrial city about fifty miles east of Syracuse. Zogby's office is situated in a particularly desolate part of town, full of vacant lots, boarded-up buildings, and closed-down pizza parlors. The office is on the third floor of a giant old factory building, on a road of what used to be textile mills. It shares the place with several small businesses—the Trim-A-Lawn Corporation, Variable Speed Motor, U.S.A. Sewing. The building's ancient elevator still has a sign in it instructing its patrons how to push the buttons by themselves, along with a newer, paper sign warning that employees caught writing on its walls will be immediately dismissed.

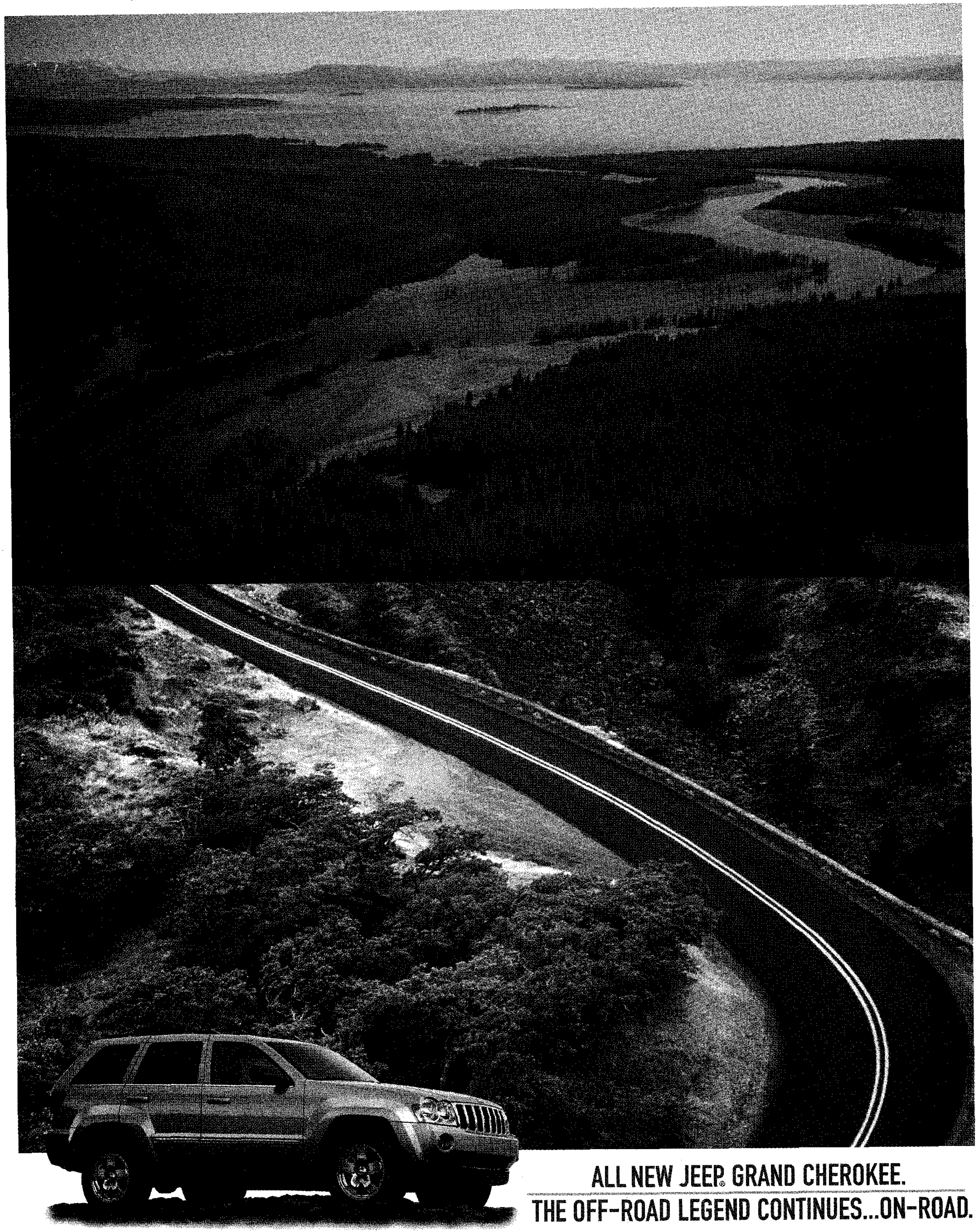
Most of Zogby's office space is taken up by the call center where the polling is done—a large, low-ceilinged room divided into rows of cubicles, each of which is equipped with a phone and a computer. There are no personal items in the cubicles, because they are occupied by several shifts of callers, which start at nine in the morning and continue until it is evening on the West Coast. The day shift at the call center consists mostly of elderly women (the oldest is eighty-six), who dress in casual pants and tops and drape cardigans over the backs of their chairs for protection against the air-conditioning. Most seem to like their work, chatting with their respondents in a grandmotherly way and commenting on their answers.

Zogby's own office has the look of a rec room from the seventies, with wood panelling and wall-to-wall blue carpet. Above his desk he has hung a large photograph of the New York City skyline at night; nearby hang his college diploma and charts detailing "Leadership Succession in the Middle East since 1945" and "Middle East Selected Socioeconomic Indicators." Over the years, Zogby has often asked himself why he stayed in Utica. Sometimes he says it's because living there keeps him in tune with what real Americans are thinking. "If folks aren't talking about it when I pick up the paper, it's not a real issue," he says, citing as an example the Gary Condit scandal, which nobody in town cared about. But he will also say that he is there because life gave him lemons and he made lemonade: his wife is from Utica, too, and didn't want to leave her family, and it was a good town to raise kids in. (They have three sons.) Whatever the reason, living in this far-from-Washington place has reinforced his sense that he is an outsider in the polling business.

Zogby thinks of himself as a natural maverick who stands outside the clubby world of the other pollsters because he finds it pompous and stuffy and because he isn't a joiner anyway. But it is also true that he uses techniques that are frowned upon by AAPOR, the American Association for Public Opinion Research, as unscientific or unethical. For instance, in order to save time and therefore money, Zogby uses only listed phone numbers; most pollsters program their phones to dial digits randomly, in order to capture unlisted phone numbers as well. Zogby says that there is no demographic difference between people with listed phone numbers and people with unlisted ones; other pollsters say studies have shown that people with unlisted phone numbers are disproportionately rich or poor.

Zogby is also willing to guard the identity of his clients if they want to remain anonymous, while AAPOR insists that an ethical pollster will always make the sponsor known if a poll's results are published, so that the public can judge whether or not he had a vested interest in the outcome. Zogby argues, reasonably enough, that if his methods are transparent and correct, the sponsor should be irrelevant. He tells clients that if they wish to publish any part of a survey they have to publish the whole thing, including the questions. But if a client wishes to publish only part of a survey—the results that he likes—Zogby offers another, rather underhanded option: he will conduct a second survey, using only the questions from the first one whose answers served the client's purposes, and the client can publish that and keep the first poll private. Zogby is not always as forthcoming about his methods as he claims. When the Pew Research Center requested information about the statistical adjustments he had used in his polls of state races in 1998, he refused to give them up. But there are things he won't do: he polled for Tom Golisano's 2002 campaign for governor of New York, and when his results showed Golisano coming in second, he says, the campaign's advisers wanted him to fiddle with the numbers lest they persuade Golisano to drop out; Zogby said no, and the campaign hired someone else.

Zogby's questions are mostly straightforward, but sometimes they are more leading than necessary. For instance, one question from a recent survey of American Muslims asks, "If you had to



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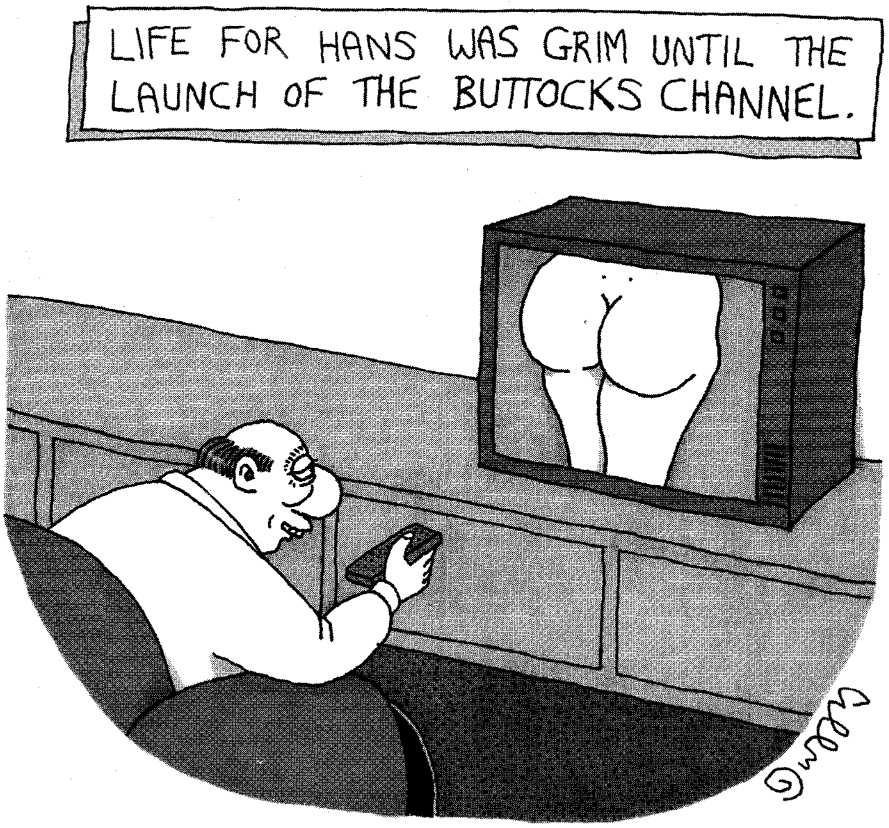
choose ONE of the following ways to wage the war against terrorism, which would you choose?” and offers these options: “Changing America’s Middle East policy,” “Use of strategic nuclear weapons,” “Attacking Iran,” “Contracting with mercenaries,” “Using U.S. Military Covert/Special Forces,” “U.S. Air Force bombing,” and “Biological warfare.” If there exist choices beyond Arafat or war, they are not offered. Zogby questions can be equally dubious in the service of a right-wing point of view. (At least in his paid work, Zogby is genuinely nonpartisan.) A 1999 poll that Zogby conducted for Newsmax, a conservative Web site, stated, “Allegations have risen”—they were totally unfounded, of course—“that Bill Clinton traded U.S. nuclear and ballistic missile technology to the Chinese for campaign contributions,” and then asked whether impeachment proceedings against him should be considered.

Some Zogby surveys can sound almost like push polls—fake polls designed not to collect data but to persuade respondents of a point of view (the prototypical push poll being one in which an interviewer calls voters and asks them whether they would be less likely to vote for Candidate A if they knew that he was a bigamist or had killed his mother with an axe). For instance, a Zogby survey conducted for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, asked respondents whether they would be likely to give up eating meat or dairy products if they were to be apprised of certain facts: “If you knew that within days of birth, chickens have their beaks seared off with a hot blade to keep them from pecking each other in their overly crowded cages?”; “If you knew that male cows and pigs are castrated without painkillers?”; or “If you knew that within days of birth, in order to make veal, male dairy calves are taken from their mothers, chained inside tiny crates to keep their muscles from developing, and fed an iron-deficient diet so that their flesh remains pale?” Provocative as these questions are, though, they do serve a legitimate polling purpose—PETA’s desire to know which grisly statement about meat will most effectively persuade the public to turn to tofu—and AAPOR allows that it is the failure to collect data, not shocking questions, that defines a push poll.

The chief reason that the polling establishment disapproves of Zogby is his practice, in political polls, of weighting for party identification. That is, once he assembles the results of a poll, if he discovers that there are, say, more self-identified Democrats and fewer Republicans than he would expect to find in a random sample, he gives each Democratic vote slightly less weight—he might count it as nine-tenths of a vote, for instance. This year, he is basing his expected party percentages on the percentages known in 2000. Weighting per se is not controversial: all pollsters adjust their totals so that their samples reflect the distributions of age and gender known to exist in the population. (And this is often necessary—women tend to answer the phone more than men, and young people are underrepresented in polls, because they spend less time at home.) But to most pollsters party identification is the very variable that a poll of political attitudes is trying to measure in the first place, so the idea of assuming a certain distribution from the outset is preposterous. “Traditional research people trained in statistics just roll their eyes,” Andrew Kohut, the former head of Gallup and now the president of Pew, says. “Party is a loose attitude, not a demographic.”

Zogby defends his method by arguing that although attitudes toward transitory issues and candidates are indeed unpredictable, a person’s relationship with a party is a fairly stable thing. “We inherit it,” he says. That’s why terms like “Reagan Democrats” come into use: people may be persuaded by a candidate of particular charisma to vote against type, but that doesn’t mean they’ll identify themselves with the other party from then on. Of course, people do sometimes change parties, and so when Zogby weights for party identification he is basing his calculation on an informed guess; but that’s O.K. with him. He believes that polling is an art as much as a science, and if informed guesses will bring him closer to the correct numbers he will use them. He believes it was his weighting by party that enabled him to get so much closer to the final electoral count in 1996 than anybody else and that is making his polls less volatile now, and it is likely that this is true.

Establishment pollsters are concerned above all with trying to eliminate guesswork from their research, with trying to make it as scientific as possible, so they stick to weightings that they can know with near-certainty are justifiable. If some real transformation is taking place in the electorate, after all, they want to discover it, and science is the way. To guess, based


LIFE FOR HANS WAS GRIM UNTIL THE LAUNCH OF THE BUTTOCKS CHANNEL.

on the past, is to preclude discerning change in the future. But Zogby doesn't want to be scientific: he wants to be right.

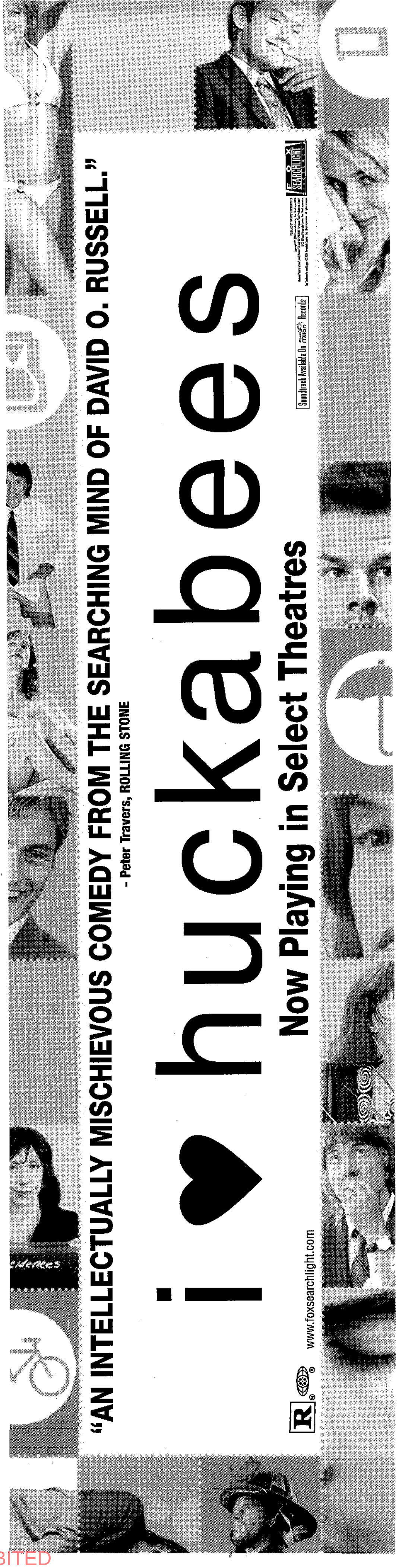
In the mid-nineteen-thirties, at the dawn of polling's modern era, the biggest and best-known poll in America was the one conducted by *Literary Digest.* Before each Presidential election, the magazine would send out as many as twenty million postcards to people all over the country whose names it gleaned primarily from automobile registries and telephone books, asking them how they planned to vote. It received as many as five million postcards in response, and so the sample size was enormous. The poll was famous because it had correctly predicted the outcome of three successive elections, from 1924 to 1932.

In 1936, Roosevelt was running for reëlection against the Republican Alfred M. Landon. That year, a young pollster named George Gallup made a bold public bet: not only would he predict the election result correctly but *Literary Digest* would get it wrong. He forecast a Roosevelt win; *Literary Digest,* he said (with amazing effrontery, since the magazine had not even started polling yet), would predict a fifty-six-per-cent victory for Landon. Sure enough, *Literary Digest's* results forecast a Landon win (indeed, within a percentage point of Gallup's prediction), and the magazine was humiliated. The trouble was that *Literary Digest's* sample, large as it was, was rotten, because people who owned cars or telephones were disproportionately affluent and disproportionately Republican. After 1936, the new breed of pollsters such as Gallup, Archibald Crossley, and Elmo Roper canvassed random samples of a few thousand in person rather than nonrandom millions through the mail.

Zogby is not wrong to talk about the polling establishment as a club. It *is* a club—in fact, it set out consciously to become one. George Gallup used to invite pollsters out to his farm in New Jersey once a year to meet each other and sit at the feet of the master. AAPOR, which was founded in 1947, is a much larger group now, but it retains its old sense of camaraderie. It recently put together a book, which consisted in part of social reminiscences ("First experience in the Poconos," the book relates of its second annual conference, in 1948. "They don't appreciate our singing, drinking, late hours") and the lyrics to songs that were sung on such occasions ("*Je vous aime,* AAPOR!"). Indeed, several of the association's current members are the sons and daughters of its founding generation.

Nancy Belden, for instance, the president of AAPOR, is the daughter of Joseph Belden, who founded the first statewide poll, in Texas. She grew up helping out in the extraordinarily labor-intensive process that polling was then: typing up questionnaires, mimeographing, collating, waiting for interviewers to conduct interviews in person, validating their findings (seeking out a certain portion of the respondents to make sure the interviews hadn't been faked), keypunching the results onto cards by hand, and sending the cards off to a mainframe to be analyzed. And that wasn't counting hiring interviewers in the first place, which Belden took very seriously: candidates had to submit to a psychological evaluation consisting of word associations (rhymers—people who picked "rat" rather than "feline" to go with "cat," for instance—didn't get hired, because Belden felt that they seized on superficial similarities rather than thinking things through). The whole process took months.

Back in the forties and fifties, polling was still new and glamorous, which is doubtless one of the reasons that there are so many second-generation pollsters. "When people found out I was related to the Texas Poll, there would be a 'wow' reaction," Nancy Belden says. Then, as now, most pollsters earned their bread and butter by conducting polls for businesses, surveying consumer preferences, and the like. (Two-thirds of Zogby's revenues come from commercial polls.) But many of the early pollsters, Gallup in particular, were idealistic about their calling, feeling that polling would bring democracy to a higher level, enabling and compelling government to be more responsive to the will of the people. Even now, many members of the polling club believe strongly in this idea. "Polling is a central part of why our democracy works so well," Nancy Belden says. "We know what people think and what they need." Frank Newport, the editor-in-chief of Gallup, defends polling against critics who claim that it affects elections—which it certainly does, pollsters' protests notwithstanding—and undermines leadership. "A lot of people don't know where Bosnia is on the map and wouldn't win on 'Jeopardy!,' " Newport says, "but instinct distills into great wisdom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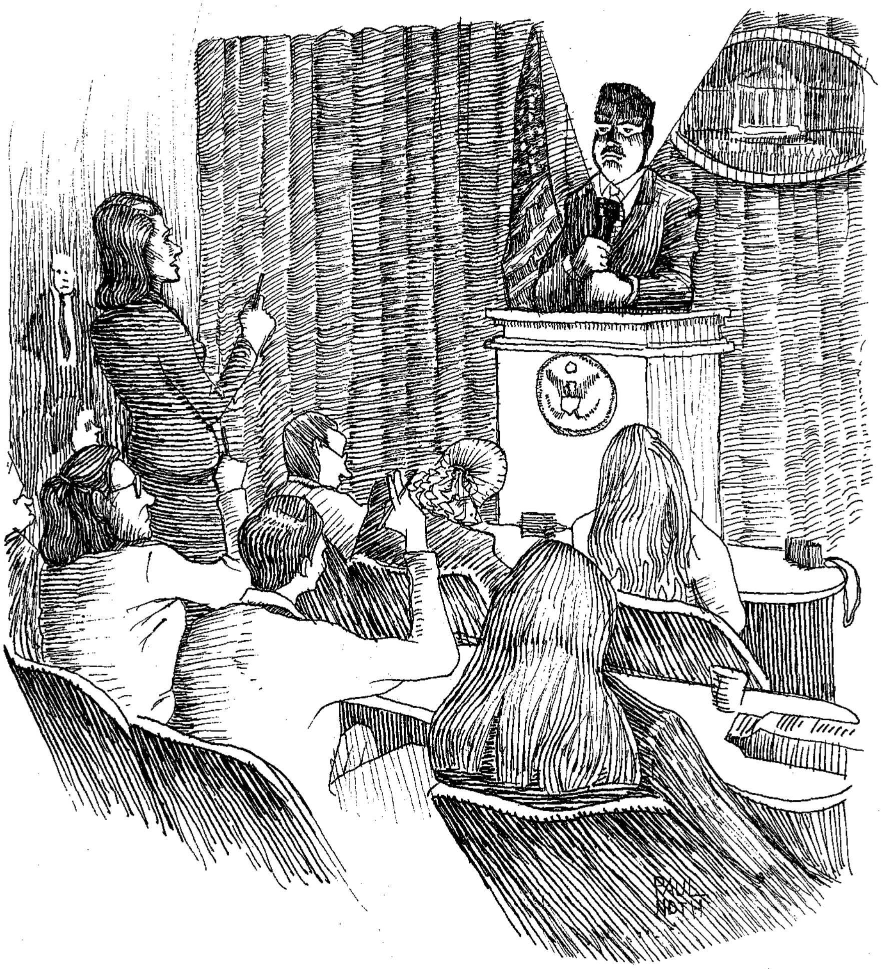

"How do you respond to critics who claim you're just trying to scare people?"

• •

with a lot of people voting." It upsets him that politicians claim never to listen to survey results, because he feels that to ignore polls is to turn your back on democracy.

Zogby tends not to talk about his business in such grand terms. He loves polling because he's obsessed with the latest political news, obsessed with information and with being the first to detect shifts of opinion. He remembers waking up each morning during the Watergate hearings feeling a glow of happiness, immediately switching on the radio, and listening to the hourly summaries throughout the day. When he was four, his brother, Jim, took him to school to exhibit him for show-and-tell because he had memorized all the American Presidents forward and backward, the names of their Vice-Presidents and of their wives, and the numbers of children they'd had.

Zogby and his brother are still close—they talk on the phone about five times a day. Jim Zogby, who lives in Washington, founded the Arab-American Institute, a lobbying group. Their parents were Catholics from Lebanon; their mother's maiden name was also Zogby—her parents came from the same village, northeast of Beirut, from which their father emigrated (the village consists, still, almost entirely of Zogbys). When they were growing up in Utica, their father owned a grocery store and their mother was a schoolteacher. John Zogby left town after high school to attend Le Moyne College, a small Jesuit school in Syracuse, intending never to return, but when he graduated, in 1970, he came back to Utica to teach in a Catholic school in order to avoid the draft. He did graduate work in history at Syracuse University and started teaching, and he met his wife, Kathy, when she was a student in his African-American history class.

In college and afterward, Zogby was a "madman on the left," as he puts it. He subscribed to the Socialist Workers Party newspaper, and began a Ph.D. dissertation on Earl Browder, once the general secretary of the American Communist Party. He helped found an alternative "free university" for the community which offered classes on peace and civil rights and Lenny Bruce. He started a consumer lobbying group. But little by little he moved toward the center. He was annoyed when two Marxist professors came to town and criticized his consumer group for not being politically pure enough. He read a biography of Earl Browder and was stunned to discover that there were four people at his funeral, because he'd been thrown out of the Party and declared a nonperson, and he said to himself, "Are these the kind of fucks that I want to be a part of?" Eventually, he abandoned academia and decided to run for mayor of Utica. He lost; but, having polled the public in the course of the race, he knew before anyone else did exactly how much he would lose by. He decided that polling was more fun than running for office. "I realized I'd rather be right than be President," he says.

Even so, Zogby finds it one of the odder twists in his career that he has been adopted by Republicans. Because he predicted correctly in 1996 that Clinton would win by a far smaller margin than most polls were forecasting, many on the right decided that here, finally, was a pollster who saw things the way they were. He was hired by the conservative New York *Post*, and appeared on Fox News programs and the Christian Broadcasting network. Rush Limbaugh praised him. He is still enough of a lefty to feel out of place in such circles, but he has learned to appreciate work from all quarters. "I'm a vender," he says. Jim Zogby, who is on the executive committee of the Democratic National Committee, used to chastise him for this promiscuity and once asked him whether there was anyone he wouldn't work for. Zogby told him big tobacco. Half an hour later, Philip Morris called requesting his services and he said yes. It was some time before he worked up the nerve to tell his brother.

Pollsters other than Zogby may stick to the same list of methodological rules, but nonetheless establishment polls like those of Gallup, Pew, and Harris often differ substantially from one another. This happens for a variety of reasons, none of which are accounted for in

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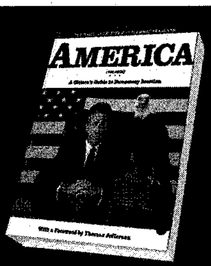

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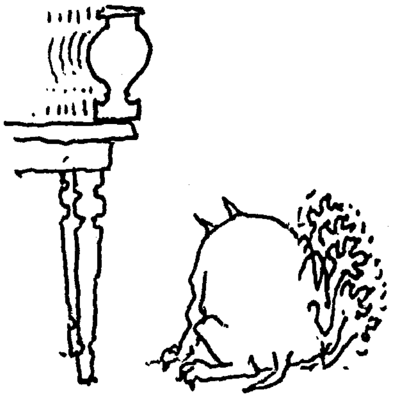
the polls' stated "margin of error." (Margin of error takes into consideration only the size of a sample, which is usually the most trivial source of inaccuracy a pollster has to worry about.) A Pew poll released on September 16th, not long after the Republican Convention, for instance, found Kerry and Bush effectively tied among likely voters, whereas a Gallup poll of likely voters released the next day found that Bush commanded a thirteen-point lead. Representatives of Pew and Gallup explained that this difference was due chiefly to extreme voter volatility. The polls, after all, purported to be measuring the state of voter opinion, so, presumably, if results were varying wildly from day to day, that meant opinions were also. But in fact the results could have been that far apart even if not a single person changed his mind between the times when Pew and Gallup conducted their research.

For one thing, the slightest variation in the wording of a question can significantly affect the result, even in a simple horse-race poll. A poll that asks whom a person would vote for if he had to vote *today* is more likely to favor the candidate currently ahead (as opposed to a poll that asks whom a person will vote for in November). The order in which questions are asked is also important. If a person approves of Bush's war in Iraq, say, but disapproves of the deficit, his response to a question about whom he plans to vote for may be affected by whether previous questions reminded him of either of those issues.

Stanley Presser, a past president of AAPOR and a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, has spent much of his career studying the effects of question wording, and knows that they can be complicated and hard to predict. Back in 1974, he tested what he thought was an easy example—a Harvard study by the eminent pollster Samuel Stouffer, conducted in the fifties during the height of McCarthyism. Stouffer had polled with questions that to Presser seemed obviously leading, such as: "There are always some people whose ideas are considered bad or dangerous by other people. For instance, somebody who is against all churches and religions. Should such a person be allowed to speak in your town?" Presser and a colleague conducted a survey of their own in which they asked half their sample the question as Stouffer had written it and the other half the question without its leading first sentence. To his surprise, Presser discovered that the change made no difference: sixty-six per cent of both halves of the survey felt that an atheist should be allowed to speak.

Presser realized that when a question was so blatantly leading, most people saw through its intent and were not affected by it. The same year, though, he conducted another poll, in which he tested responses to a more subtle difference. He asked half of his sample, "Do you think the United States should allow public speeches against democracy?" and the other half, "Do you think the United States should forbid public speeches against democracy?" This time, the difference between the two groups was very large indeed: fifty-six per cent said no to the first question, but only thirty-nine per cent said yes to the second. Presser saw that, while "not allow" and "forbid" might literally mean the same thing, the difference in the connotations of the words—the intimidating, legalistic tone of "forbid," compared with the gentler, parental tone of "not allow"—was significant enough to reverse a person's stated opinion on an issue and alter the majority result of a survey. He concluded that, because such effects were so unpredictable, if a survey was really to get at the truth of a matter it had to ask about it in several different ways. It is a source of continual irritation to him that so few surveys do this.

For this reason, ever since his studies in the seventies, Presser has felt that polls that ask people whether they're for or against things are not to be trusted. Absolute percentages, he believes, are pretty much useless. But he does place considerable faith in *comparative* percentages. Do seventy-six per cent of American Ph.D.s believe that dogs are cuter than ferrets? He doubts that we can ever know for sure. But were a poll to compare the responses of Ph.D.s and high-school dropouts to the same question, or were a poll to compare the responses of Ph.D.s ten years ago with the responses of Ph.D.s today, then, he believes, a meaningful result can be obtained: because the same question is used for the two separate groups, whatever prejudicial effect its wording might have will be cancelled out. When Presser was in graduate school, at the University of Michigan, he used to run into an émigré statistician named Leslie Kish in the elevator. Presser would ask how he was doing; Kish would reply, "Compared to whom?"



Timing is another reason that election polls often differ from each other. Polls that come out after a convention, for instance, are likely to be compared for their estimate of a convention bounce, but if one polling company did its calling during the convention and another just a day or two afterward they may show different results. What's more, a poll that is conducted over three or four days rather than one or two is likely to be more accurate because it will have a better chance of reaching people who were not home the first time they were called. Survey samples are ideally supposed to be random, and everyone in the sample should have an equal chance of being questioned. A survey, then, that registered only the responses of people who were home on a Saturday night would not be as close to that ideal as one that polled on Sunday and Monday as well. There is also the matter of interview protocol. All pollsters include options such as "not sure" and "don't know," but not all interviewers are instructed to read those options to the respondents. (Zogby's interviewers almost never do.) If it is not explicitly suggested to a respondent that "not sure" is a valid reply to a question, he may well come up with an opinion, so as not to appear stupid or unhelpful, but this opinion may be hesitant and unconsidered, and he may change his mind about it the next day. The pollster, however, will register it as having the same validity as the response of someone with a firm conviction on the issue.

Probably the single most important factor in generating the differences in establishment election polls, though, is the nature of the sample: some polls survey all adults, some polls survey only registered voters, and some polls survey only likely voters. The first two categories are relatively straightforward (though follow-up research has determined that people

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lie about being registered to vote); it's the third one that's tricky. Figuring out who is likely to vote is difficult, especially several months before an election; every polling firm has its own algorithm, and the nature of the algorithm has a large effect on a poll's outcome. Gallup, for instance, asks respondents seven questions, such as: "Do you happen to know where people in your neighborhood go to vote?" and "In the election for President in November of 2000, did things come up that kept you from voting, or did you happen to vote?" (Each firm asks slightly different questions, and that makes for discrepancy: questions that ask about past voting behavior, for example, may affect results because regularity of turnout is associated with high socioeconomic status, which, in turn, is associated with voting Republican. Almost every firm will ask directly how likely the person is to vote; but responses to that question are unreliable, because they will depend on the person's feelings about the election at that moment, which may change the next day if an event or piece of news stirs up his anger or enthusiasm.) Gallup then assumes that only fifty or fifty-five per cent of the population will vote in the election, since that is historically the case, and counts only the fifty or fifty-five per cent of its sample that scored the highest on the likely-voter questionnaire. This method of calculation means that Gallup is throwing out half of its sample (rather than, say, weighting the whole sample), and that is risky for the same reason that weighting for party is risky: it means that Gallup is relying on a key variable in the election—in this case turnout—remaining unchanged.

Polling isn't all statistics, though—if it were, Zogby wouldn't want to be in the business. Sometimes in the course of work he gets to do one of the things he loves most, which is to chat with someone nearly as obsessive as he is about the intricacies of political races, past and present. One afternoon, he had an appointment to talk on the phone with such a person, the novelist Richard North Patterson. Patterson was writing a political thriller about a Presidential candidate named Chad Palmer, inspired by John McCain, and, since he wanted the book to be realistic, he had arranged to consult with Zogby on the details of the race. Palmer had already won the New Hampshire primary, as McCain did in 2000, and the question now was how well he could plausibly do in other states, given that he was opposed to an amendment to ban gay marriage and was dating a liberal black Hollywood actress. Zogby is a big fan of thrillers and mysteries, and a particular fan of Patterson's books, so he found the idea of contributing to one extremely exciting. He sat at his desk in his office and leaned eagerly into his speakerphone.

"I think Michigan is made to order for Palmer," he said. "I don't think it's far-fetched to have him winning South Carolina, but a lot of mischief can be done in Michigan. The autoworkers came out to vote to defeat George W. Bush, but this is the home of the Reagan Democrat, and it's easier for Reagan Democrats to cross over for a moderate conservative. I think also there are very good opportunities in Pennsylvania."

"It's Fasano's home state," Patterson reminded him. Fasano was Palmer's rival from the religious right.

"Oh, that's right. I close my eyes and think Rick Santorum."

"You're supposed to. Ugly thought, but the son of a bitch has had more survival power than I ever thought he would."

"I know. He's also a foul, foul kid. The Fasano novel is next, right?"

The conversation with Patterson drifted from Chad Palmer to his real-life counterpart, McCain, whom both Patterson and Zogby knew and admired. (He is a former Zogby client.)

"McCain is one of those rare people like Jimmy Carter that, when you like them, you project yourself on them," Zogby said. "I always remember that Jimmy Carter won the New Hampshire primary in 1976 by running to the right of all the liberals, then went down to Florida and ran to the left of Scoop Jackson and George Wallace. A poll came out and forty-three per cent of Americans thought Jimmy Carter was pro-life and forty-four per cent thought he was pro-choice. They just liked Jimmy Carter. And that's true of John McCain: 'He's a great man and I love him, he couldn't possibly be . . . '—fill in the blank."

"I don't know how many fanatical pro-choicers I know who love McCain," Patterson said.

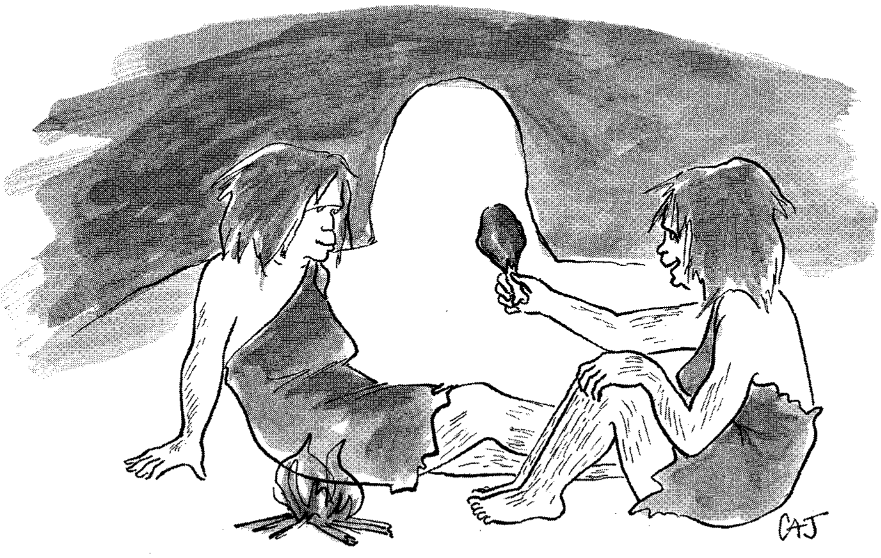
"Well, this whole bear hug is a very intriguing thing." Zogby had been horrified to open the newspaper a few days earlier to see McCain clinging to the President from the side, his arms wrapped all the way around Bush's torso, like a just-saved refugee.

"Oh boy, it made me squirm, because I know what John feels about Bush," Patterson said.

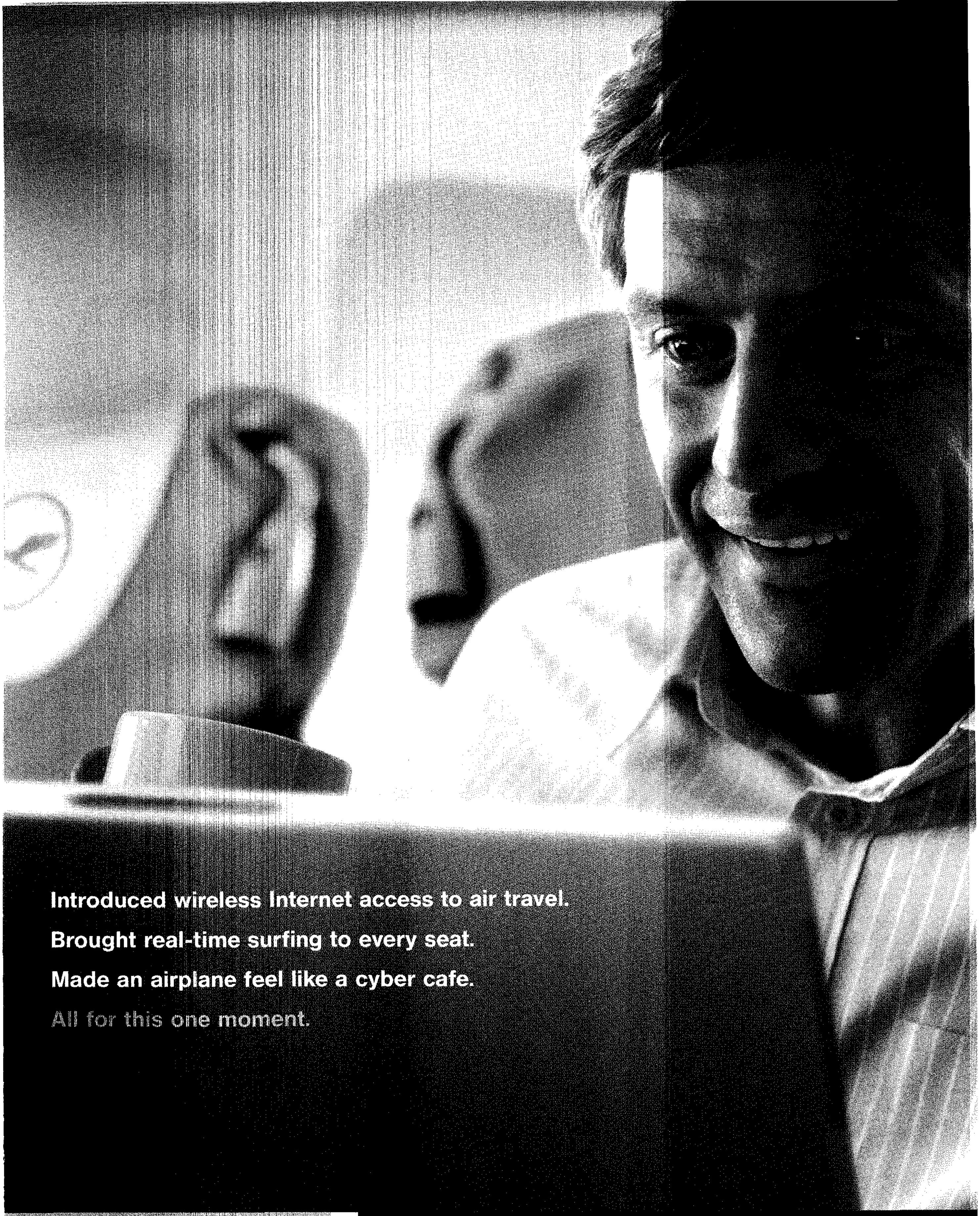
" 'Disgust' is probably too mild a word."

"He's got his admiration under tight control, that's for sure," Patterson said. "I'm pretty close to John, but I'm unable to ask him about it."

Zogby and Patterson agreed to speak again soon, and Zogby hung up the phone smiling. He was still thrilled by the thought of playing a role in plotting the novel. He had suggested to Patterson that Palmer should hire Zogby as his campaign pollster. He had been joking, of course, but you never knew. ♦



"Dab a little of this behind your ears. It'll drive him crazy."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REALITY CHECK

John Kerry's Iraq attack.

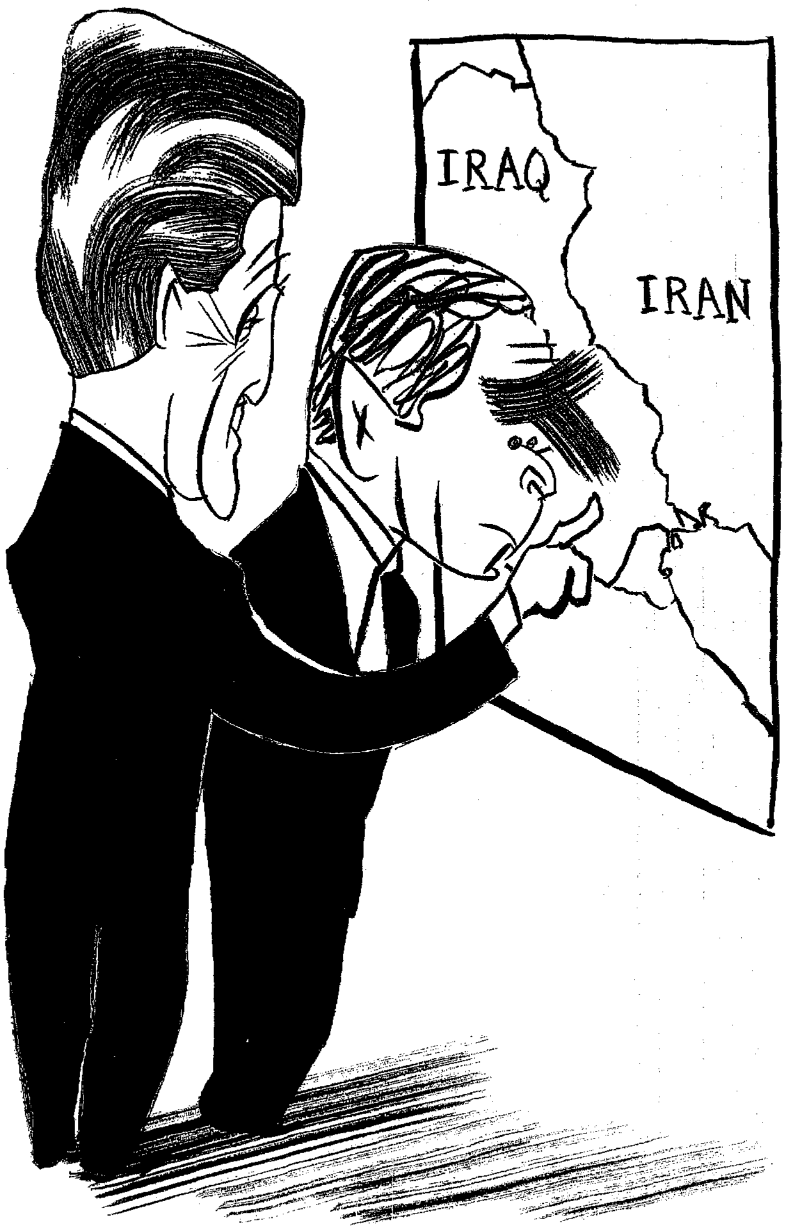
BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

Despite a pre-debate "memorandum of understanding" between the Bush campaign and the Kerry campaign that there would be no televised "cutaways" or reaction shots, more than sixty-two million Americans watched George W. Bush appear to come unglued while hearing, for the first time, John Kerry's forceful voice of opposition.

Bush's face betrayed him on the very first cutaway. He had insisted that the focus of his initial encounter with Kerry, in Coral Gables, Florida, be foreign policy and national security—the issues on which, as a self-proclaimed "war President," he believes himself to be strongest, and on which he has staked his bid for a second term—yet, barely a minute into the debate, he had been subjected to more direct criticism than he had endured in public in the previous four years, and it soon became obvious that he couldn't take it. A coin toss had earned Kerry the opening question—"Do you believe you could do a better job than President Bush in preventing another 9/11-type terrorist attack on the United States?"—and, with his answer, he established a command of the room that he never relinquished. "Yes, I do," Kerry said. "I believe America is safest and strongest when we are leading the world and we are leading strong alliances. I'll never give a veto to any country over our security. But I also know how to lead those alliances. This President has left them in shatters across the globe, and we're now ninety per cent of the casualties in Iraq and ninety per cent of the costs. I think that's wrong, and I think we can do better." Kerry spoke with confidence and a newfound crispness, and, as he went on, there was Bush on the split screen, looking irked and puckered.

The President held his head slightly cocked and low to his shoulders, and his expressions kept shifting, in increments of wincing aggravation—lips drawn tight and downward, nostrils flaring and flattening, eyebrows wriggling—through a range of attitudes: impatience, boredom, indignation, sourness, imperiousness, contempt. This unhappy twitchiness persisted through the evening, as Kerry, the former prosecutor, laid out with cool composure the case for firing Bush, and established his own credibility as a Presidential replacement. Bush, even when he had the floor, grimaced as he spoke, except on several occasions when he lost his way and a look of total erasure came over him, a blank, stricken stare for which the French, alas, have the most apt expression: like a cow watching a train go by.

You didn't need to be rooting for Bush to be distressed by the spectacle of his discombobulation. You needed only to care for the Republic. Bush takes credit for "changing the world," and there's no question that in leading the country to war in Iraq he has altered the international political landscape, and America's position in it, more than anyone in nearly half a century. The Re-



Kerry managed to come across both as anti-war and as a hawk on terrorism.

TOM BACHTELL

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publican domination of both houses of Congress has allowed him to do this almost by fiat, without domestic political resistance or accountability. At the White House, too, Bush is ferociously insulated from exposure to opinions that deviate from the party line. He does not like to be questioned and has little use for argument. Logic has never been his strong suit; in justifying his policies and actions, he prefers stonewalling (admit no error, and ignore or deny bad news) and tautology (I do what's right because it's right, and it's right because I do it). Now, faced for the first time in his Presidency with an inescapable adversary, he appeared to experience the debate as an insult. At times he sulked, at times he winced, as Kerry picked apart the Administration's catastrophic Iraq adventure. "I didn't need anybody to tell me to go to the United Nations," Bush protested. "I decided to go there myself." And, a bit later, "Of course I know Osama bin Laden attacked us. I know that."

Bush had been favored to win the foreign-policy debate, and since for a month he had enjoyed a solid lead in the polls, reporters arrived in Coral Gables prepared to write Kerry's political obituary with a local dateline. An election campaign is largely an affair of competitive storytelling, and Bush is an ingenious sketch artist: just as he had convinced the press and the public that Iraq posed an imminent nuclear threat, he succeeded, in the late summer, in spinning such a web of confusion out of selective repetition of Kerry's caveat-laden statements on Iraq that his caricature of Kerry became the prevailing view.

But Kerry's strong performance was less surprising than Bush's wipeout. Although most TV viewers had not heard Kerry speak at length about Iraq before, his comeback from a late-summer slump had begun two weeks earlier, on September 16th, at the annual convention of the National Guard Association in Las Vegas. Bush, addressing the gathering earlier in the week, had delivered a glowing review of the war in Iraq and the broader war on terror, and was frequently interrupted by standing ovations. Now it was Kerry's turn, and, by way of pre-speech spin, his spokeswoman, Stephanie Cutter, told reporters on his campaign plane during the flight to Nevada to expect an overwhelmingly Republican audience of active-duty servicemen and women who might boo upon hearing their Commander-in-Chief criticized.

"Two days ago, President Bush came before you and you received him well, as you should," Kerry told the National Guard. "But I believe he failed the fundamental test of leadership. He failed to tell you the truth." Nobody booed and nobody clapped, and Kerry went on, "The President stood right where I'm standing and did not even acknowledge that more than a thousand men and women have lost their lives in Iraq. He did not tell you that with each passing day we're seeing more chaos, more violence, more indiscriminate killings. He did not tell you that with each passing week our enemies are getting bolder—that Pentagon officials report that entire regions of Iraq are now in the hands of terrorists and extremists. He did not tell you that with each passing month stability and security seem farther and farther away. He did not tell you any of this, even though—as the country learned today in the New York *Times*—his own intelligence officials have warned him for weeks that the mission in Iraq is in serious trouble. But that is the truth—hard as it is to hear. You deserve a President who will not play politics with national security, who will not ignore his own intelligence, while living in a fantasy world of spin."

The President's conduct of the war was defined by "serious mistakes" and "wrong choices" from the outset, Kerry said. "And, perhaps worst of all, the mess in Iraq has set us back—way back—in the war on terror. The simple fact is, when it comes to the war on terror, George W. Bush has taken his eye off the ball." Kerry said that he would have done "al-

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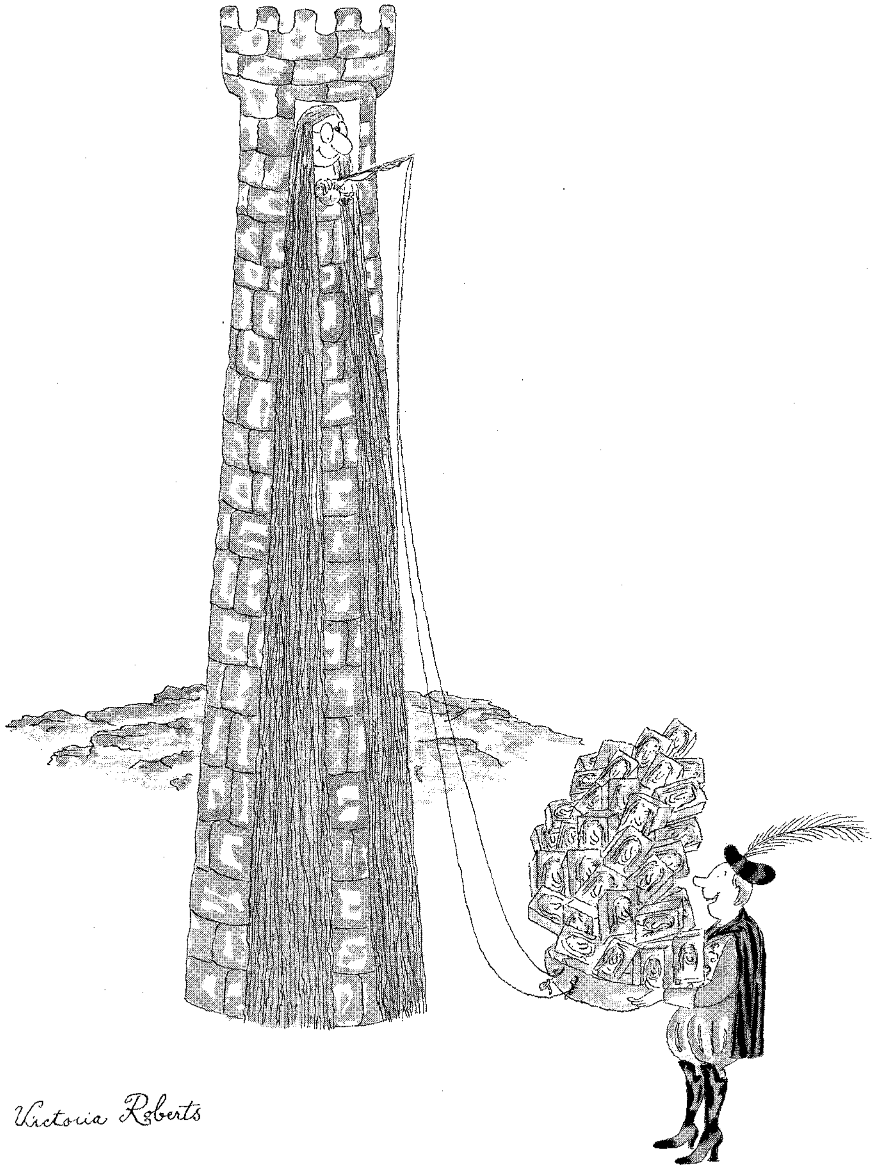
most everything differently,” but he insisted that it was not too late to correct the damage done by Bush’s bad leadership. When he finished, at least half the audience stood and clapped, albeit briefly.

A few days later, at New York University, Kerry delivered another major speech on the war. “The President now admits to ‘miscalculations’ in Iraq,” he said. “That is one of the greatest understatements in recent American history. His were not the equivalent of accounting errors. They were colossal failures of judgment—and judgment is what we look for in a President.” The war had made America weaker, he said, and less safe. “Yet, today, President Bush tells us that he would do everything all over again, the same way. How can he possibly be serious?” And on September 24th, in Philadelphia, Kerry took the war on terrorism as his theme. “The invasion of Iraq was a profound diversion from the battle against our greatest enemy—Al Qaeda,” Kerry said. “George Bush made Saddam Hussein the priority. I would have made Osama bin Laden the priority. As President, I will finish the job in Iraq and refocus our energies on the real war on terror.”

In these speeches, staggered over eight days, Kerry managed to come across both as anti-war and as a hawk on terrorism—a remarkable political balancing act. He spoke of winning in Iraq, recommitting to Afghanistan, bolstering homeland security, reviving alliances, waging a peaceful war of ideas to tame extremism in the Muslim world, and hunting down Osama bin Laden. His “plan” for Iraq was as sketchy as it was ambitious—bring in allies, step up training, intensify reconstruction, foster and recruit a United Nations protection force to make elections possible, and, if successful, begin to withdraw American forces within a year. Kerry did not pretend that it would be easy to get other countries to help him realize these ends. “But I have news for President Bush,” he said. “Just because *you* can’t do something doesn’t mean it can’t be done.”



“I got Golden Ash Blond No. 334, just like you said.”

Kerry’s focus on war and terrorism was strategically timed to lead up to the first debate, and, more immediately, to overshadow Bush’s address to the U.N. General Assembly, in New York, and the state visit to Washington of Iraq’s American-installed interim Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi (whose morning-in-Iraq rhetoric in an address to Congress might as well have been drafted by a Bush-campaign speechwriter). Kerry’s preëmptive strategy was successful: at a Rose Garden press conference with Allawi, Bush was repeatedly asked, with reference to Kerry’s charges, how he accounted for the discrepancies between his triumphalist claims about the pacification and democratization of Iraq and the anarchic scenes of battle, bombardment, carnage, and beheading that filled the news. For the first time since the Democratic Convention, at the end of July, Kerry was setting the agenda for the nation’s political press, and he was doing it by speaking substantively to the all-dominating issue of this election year. “He’s wanted to give that speech for a long time,” Stephanie Cutter told me after Kerry delivered his withering assessment of Bush’s war policy, and Senator Joseph Biden said that Kerry had told him, “I feel liberated.”

“Because guess what?” Biden said to a half-dozen reporters who were standing around after an outdoor Kerry rally in Philadelphia. “Bush’s strength on foreign policy is incredibly thin, shallow, and weak. It is. Factually.” What’s more, he said, “If John crosses that threshold on national security, this is over. Does anybody think George Bush has a plan for the economy and jobs? Does anybody think George Bush has a plan for health care? Does anybody think George Bush is actually going to spend more money on education?”

At that time, six days before the debate

SELF-PORTRAIT

I lived between my heart and my head,
like a married couple who can't get along.

I lived between my left arm, which is swift
and sinister, and my right, which is righteous.

I lived between a laugh and a scowl,
and voted against myself, a two-party system.

My left leg dawdled or danced along,
my right cleaved to the straight and narrow.

My left shoulder was like a stripper on vacation,
my right stood upright as a Roman soldier.

Let's just say that my left side was the organ
donor and leave my private parts alone,

but as for my eyes, which are two shades
of brown, well, Dionysus meet Apollo.

Look at Eve raising her left eyebrow
while Adam puts his right foot down.

No one expected it to survive,
but divorce seemed out of the question.

I suppose my left hand and my right hand
will be clasped over my chest in the coffin

and I'll be reconciled at last,
I'll be whole again.

—*Edward Hirsch*

in Coral Gables, the suggestion that Bush might be vulnerable on Iraq or the war on terror was a kind of heresy. A wire-service reporter urged Biden to reconsider. Kerry's "core competencies," the reporter said, were the economy and health care. Wasn't Kerry just being opportunistic, now that Iraq was in the headlines? "No!" Biden shouted, and when the reporter persisted—"What if the beheadings aren't in the news in October?"—the Senator tipped back on his heels a moment, as if to get a better look at him, and said, "Hey, you are a real horse's ass, aren't you?" Mike McCurry, a former Clinton press secretary, who has been travelling with Kerry since early September, stood nearby, jiggling with laughter. McCurry told me, "The subtext of this whole week was: If you think that George Bush's strength is foreign policy and national security, think again, then look at Kerry."

In the Coral Gables debate, as in Kerry's three mid-September speeches, the underlying message of his challenge to Bush's view of Iraq was: Let's get real. "We're making progress," Bush said several times during the debate, in response to Kerry's recitations of all the ways that "this incredible mess in Iraq" had gone from very bad to much worse. Bush had dismissed Kerry's speech in Las Vegas, by declaring, as he often does, "Freedom is on the march." Now he conceded, "In Iraq, no doubt about it, it's tough. It's hard work. It's incredibly hard." He used the phrase "hard work" eleven times that

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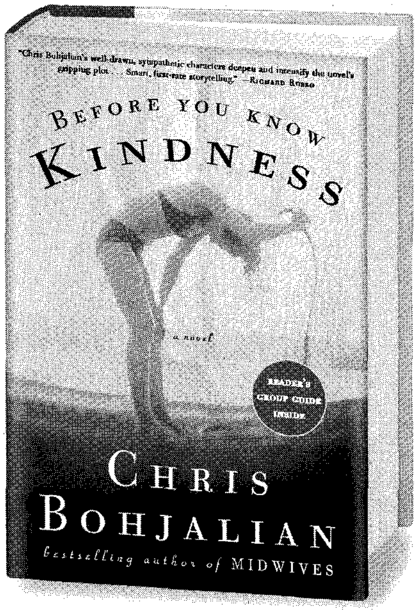
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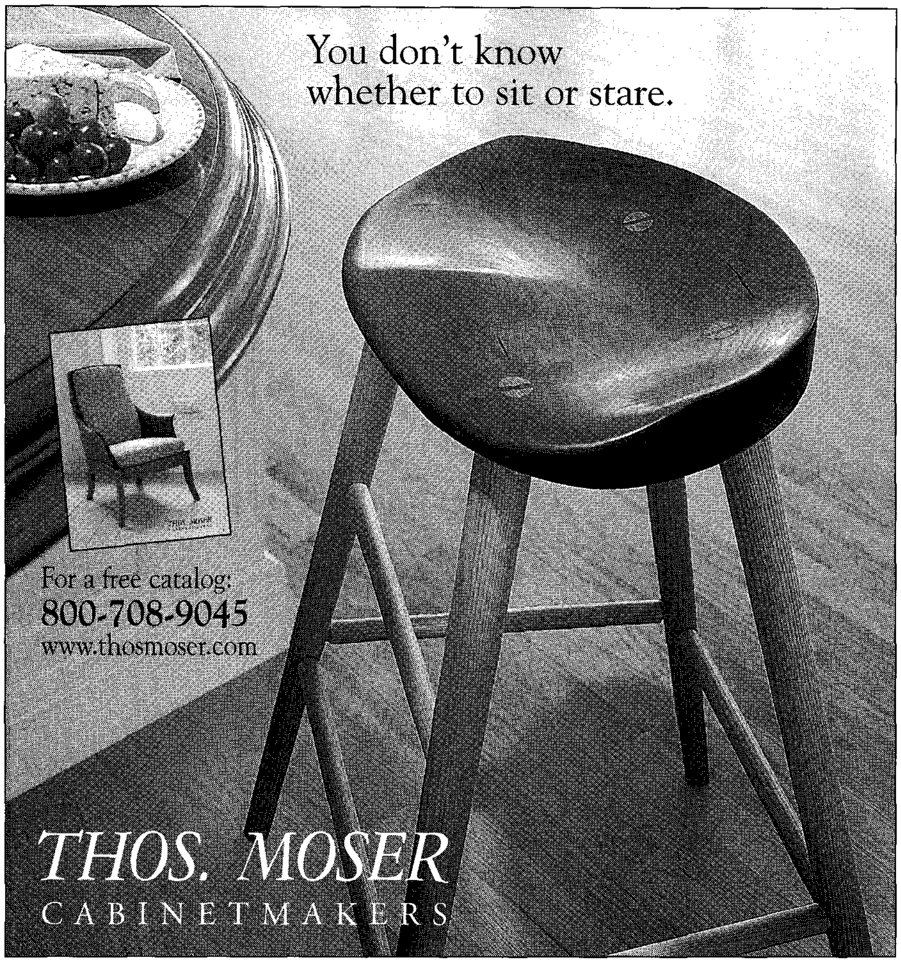

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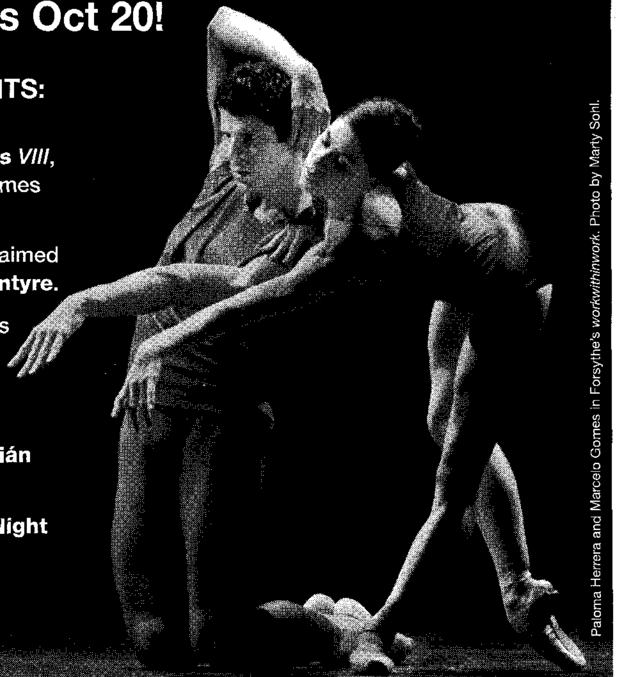

Paloma Herrera and Marcelo Gomes in Forsythe's *workwithinwork*. Photo by Marty Sohl.

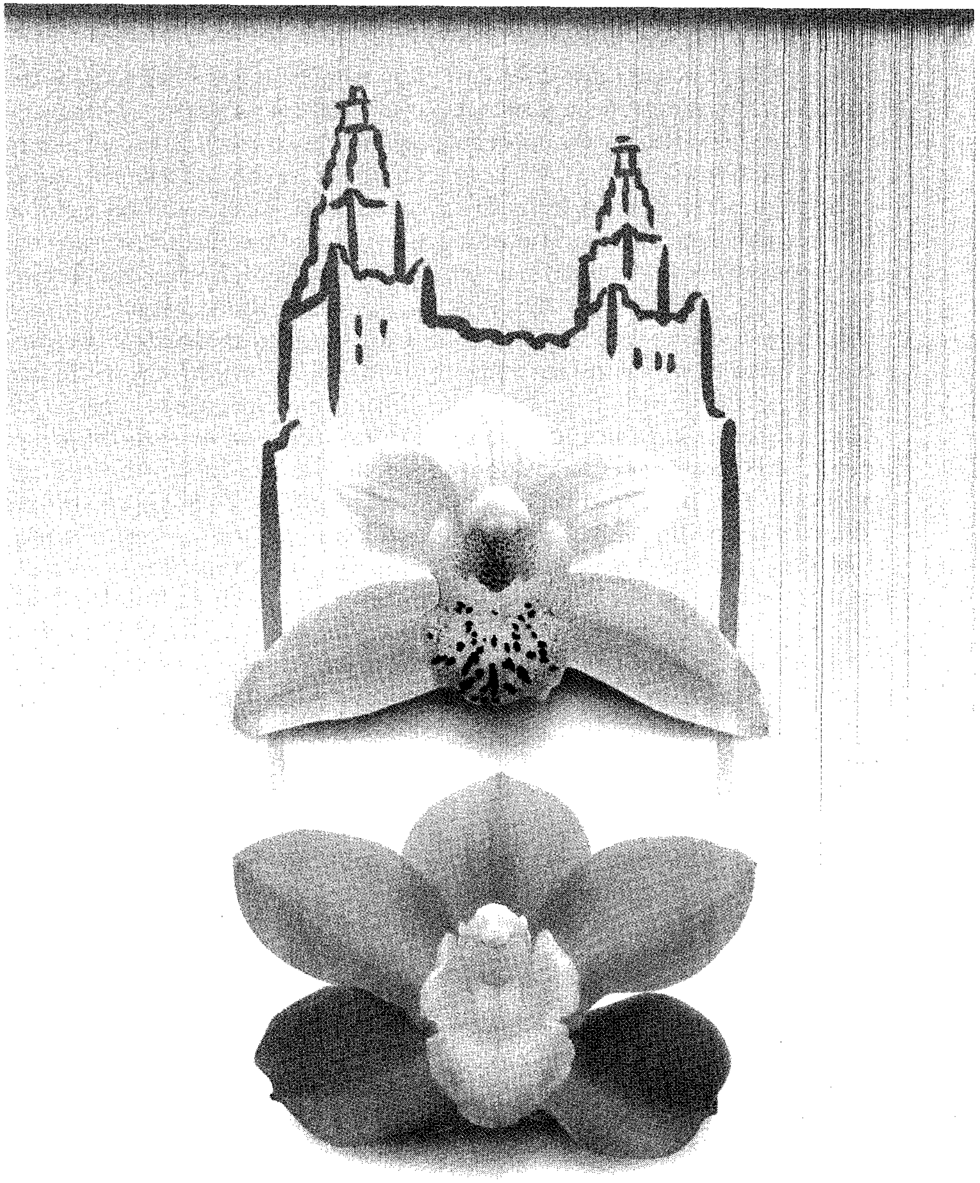
evening, mostly to describe the war, and he said, "We're getting the job done." Kerry, who likes to point out that it is impossible to fix a problem that you refuse to acknowledge, kept up the attack. "This President, I don't know if he sees what's really happened over there," he said, returning to the theme of his National Guard speech, and he added, "What I'm trying to do is just talk the truth to the American people and to the world. The truth is what good policy is based on. It's what leadership is based on." Bush rested his case on different values—staying "on the offensive," for instance—and he concluded, "By being steadfast and resolute, and strong, by keeping our word, by supporting our troops, we can achieve the peace we all want."

Steadfastness, however, seemed to be in shorter than usual supply within the Administration in the week after Coral Gables. Perhaps it was the onset of an election-year October—the political hurricane season—or perhaps just the relentlessness of the bad news from Iraq. There was Condoleezza Rice being forced by a newspaper article to admit she had been aware before the war that the true use of some aluminum tubes she once touted as proof of an Iraqi nuclear-arms program was actually a subject of dispute among intelligence experts. (In fact, at the time, senior nuclear experts in Bush's Energy Department doubted that the tubes had anything to do with nukes.) There was Donald Rumsfeld being asked at the Council on Foreign Relations about the supposed link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda and responding, "To my knowledge, I have not seen any strong, hard evidence that links the two." (Rumsfeld later claimed that he'd been misunderstood, but his answer was a model of unambiguous lucidity.) There was Paul Bremer, the Bush-appointed former head of the Coalition Authority in Iraq, declaring—as John Kerry likes to say on the stump—that the Administration failed to send a sufficient number of troops. (Kerry, campaigning in Iowa, reacted to the news by saying, "I don't know if the President is constitutionally incapable of acknowledging the truth, I don't know if he's just so stubborn that he's going to go down.") There was a new C.I.A. report, which undermined the notion that the Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—

who is blamed for many of the beheadings in Iraq—had ties to Saddam Hussein. (Vice-President Cheney, who had commissioned the report, chose to ignore its conclusions.) There was Iyad Allawi in Baghdad, back from the Rose Garden, sounding grim and embattled.

And there was, at last, a definitive report from the chief U.S. arms inspector for Iraq, Charles A. Duelfer, which found that Saddam had had no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and no active weapons programs in the period before Bush invaded. On the day that Duelfer's report was released, Bush—no doubt eager to blunt its impact and regain the campaign offensive—went to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to deliver what the White House billed as a "significant speech." In fact, the event was a campaign rally, Bush's favorite format, and the speech was a beefed-up stump speech, packed with all the lines he should have said in Coral Gables. After a recitation of his standard explanation for the Iraq war as integral to the war on terror, an act of punishment of Saddam's defiance that was necessitated by the experience of September 11th, Bush omitted his usual acknowledgment that weapons of mass destruction may never be found in Iraq. Instead, he said, "I understand some Americans have strong concerns about our role in Iraq. I respect the fact that they take this issue seriously, because it is a serious matter." And then he invoked, once again, the tautological imperative: "I assure them we're in Iraq because I deeply believe it is necessary and right and critical to the outcome of the war on terror."

So we are there because he believes. As for Kerry, Bush said, "In our debate, he once again came down firmly on every side of the Iraq war. He stated that Saddam Hussein was a threat and that America had no business removing that threat. Senator Kerry said our soldiers and marines are not fighting for a mistake—but also called the liberation of Iraq a 'colossal error.' He said we need to do more to train Iraqis, but he also said we shouldn't be spending so much money over there. He said he wants to hold a summit meeting, so he can invite other countries to join what he calls 'the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.' He said terrorists are pouring across the Iraqi border, but also said that



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fighting those terrorists is a diversion from the war on terror. You hear all that and you can understand why somebody would make a face."

Before an adoring crowd, with a few days' reaction time and the help of a good speechwriter, Bush proved to be an electrifyingly clever debater. But, just when he was scoring his best points in Wilkes-Barre, he started making things up. During the Coral Gables debate, Kerry had been asked about his attitude toward preëmptive war—the main ingredient of the "Bush doctrine," which also advocates unilateralism. "No President, through all of American history, has ever ceded, and nor would I, the right to preëmpt in any way necessary to protect the United States of America," Kerry said. "But if and when you do it you have to do it in a way that passes the test, that passes the global test where your countrymen, your people understand fully why you're doing what you're doing and you can prove to the world that you did it for legitimate reasons."

By "global test," Kerry obviously meant not so much a formal procedure as an attitude—the spirit expressed by the Founding Fathers when they drafted the Declaration of Independence with "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind." Bush, however, seized on the phrase as an ideal target for ridicule and distortion. He called it "the Kerry doctrine" (in Wilkes-Barre, he even pretended that Kerry had called it that), and he made it out to mean a system of subjugating America's war-making authority to foreigners—the opposite of what Kerry had said. "Under this test, America would not be able to act quickly against threats, because we're sitting around waiting for our grade from other nations and other leaders," Bush said mockingly, and went on, "This mind-set will paralyze America in a dangerous world. . . . The Senator would have America bend over backwards to satisfy a handful of governments with agendas different from our own. This is my opponent's alliance-building strategy: brush off your best friends, fawn over your critics. And that is no way to gain the respect of the world."

Even with the fabrications and the misrepresentations, there was no denying that, with barely four weeks until Election Day, America was engaged, at last, in the sort of vigorous national debate that one might imagine to be the whole point of a Presidential-campaign season. Yet so much is left unsaid. In Iraq, there are only bad options—exit or escalate. And Kerry and Bush agreed in Coral Gables that Iraq is not even our greatest problem. Nuclear proliferation is, and particularly the possibility of loose nukes falling into the hands of terrorists. Of course, Bush credits the war in Iraq with sending a message to rogue proliferators: You could be next. By way of example, he cites Libya, whose leader, Muammar Qaddafi, he says, undertook to "disarm" his nuclear-weapons program shortly after marines toppled the statue of Saddam in Baghdad. (In fact, the equipment for Qaddafi's reactor was still in crates, unassembled, and he had been negotiating the trade-in for a long time, without any reference to Saddam.) In the meantime, Iran and North Korea, Iraq's original partners in Bush's "axis of evil," have heard the President's message differently, and have advanced their nuclear programs significantly since the American takeover of Baghdad; the North Korean state news agency has cited Iraq as an example of what can happen to countries that can't defend themselves with nukes.

For Bush, to say that the world is not as he describes it is to give solace to our enemies, undermine our forces on the field of battle, and endanger the lives of the citizenry. Even as the Duelfer report made it clear that Saddam Hussein had posed no threat to America, had no capacity to produce a threat, and had nothing to give to others to threaten us with, Bush stood on the stump in Wilkes-Barre scolding Kerry for saying the very same thing. "The problem with this approach is obvious," the President proclaimed. "If America waits until a threat is at our doorstep, it might be too late." Kerry is offering himself as the candidate of change—truth vs. unreality, a fresh start vs. more of the same. We need friends in this dangerous world, he says, and we need diplomacy to try and disarm and contain our enemies lest it should be our burden, otherwise, to destroy them. What Kerry doesn't say—and cannot say—is that when it comes to real threats, like North Korea and Iran, Bush's fixation with Iraq may already have made it too late for any American President to find a peaceful solution. ♦

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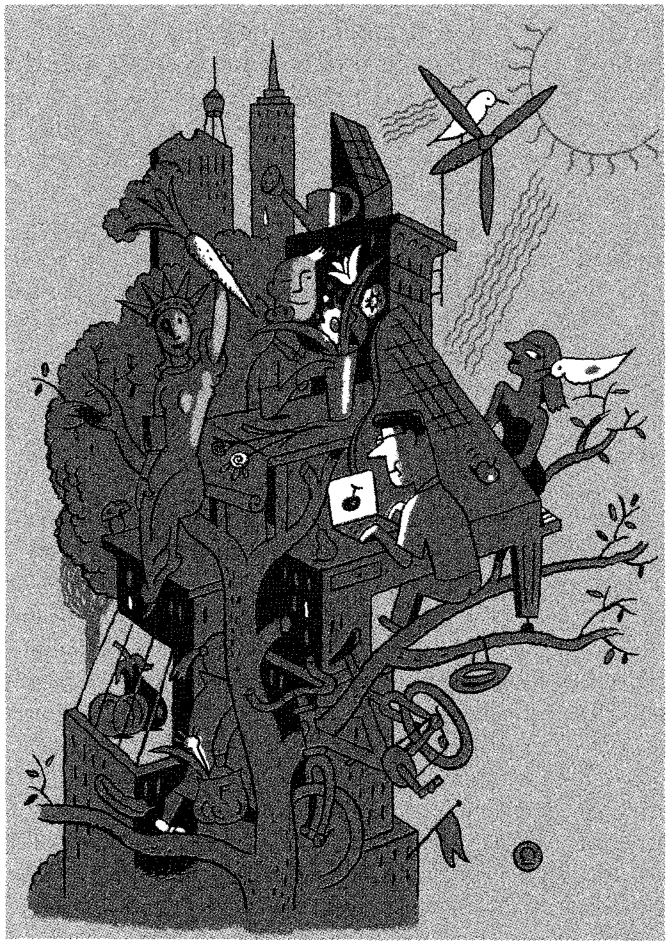
GREEN MANHATTAN

Everywhere should be more like New York.

BY DAVID OWEN

My wife and I got married right out of college, in 1978. We were young and naïve and unashamedly idealistic, and we decided to make our first home in a utopian environmentalist community in New York State. For seven years, we lived, quite contentedly, in circumstances that would strike most Americans as austere in the extreme: our living space measured just seven hundred square feet, and we didn't have a dishwasher, a garbage disposal, a lawn, or a car. We did our grocery shopping on foot, and when we needed to travel longer distances we used public transportation. Because space at home was scarce, we seldom acquired new possessions of significant size. Our electric bills worked out to about a dollar a day.

The utopian community was Manhattan. (Our apartment was on Sixty-ninth Street, between Second and Third.) Most Americans, including most New Yorkers, think of New York City as an ecological nightmare, a wasteland of concrete and garbage and diesel fumes and traffic jams, but in comparison with the rest of America it's a model of environmental responsibility. By the most significant measures, New York is the greenest community in the United States, and one of the greenest cities in the world. The most devastating damage humans have done to the environment has arisen from the heedless burning of fossil fuels, a category in which New Yorkers are practically prehistoric. The average Manhattanite consumes gasoline at a rate that the country as a whole hasn't matched since the mid-nineteen-twenties, when the most widely owned car in the United States was the Ford Model T. Eighty-two per cent of Manhattan residents travel to work by public transit, by bicycle, or on foot. That's ten times the rate for Americans in general, and eight times the rate for residents of Los Angeles County. New York City is more populous than all but eleven states; if it were granted statehood, it would rank fifty-first in per-capita energy use.



Cities offer a remedy for some of our worst environmental ills.

EVER MEULEN

"Anyplace that has such tall buildings and heavy traffic is obviously an environmental disaster—except that it isn't," John Holtzclaw, a transportation consultant for the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council, told me. "If New Yorkers lived at the typical American sprawl density of three households per residential acre, they would require many times as much land. They'd be driving cars, and they'd have huge lawns and be using pesticides and fertilizers on them, and then they'd be overwatering their lawns, so that runoff would go into streams." The key to New York's relative environmental benignity is its extreme compactness. Manhattan's population density is more than eight hundred times that of the nation as a whole. Placing one and a half million people on a twenty-three-square-mile island sharply reduces their opportunities to be wasteful, and forces the majority to live in some of the most inherently energy-efficient residential structures in the world: apartment buildings. It also frees huge tracts of land for the rest of America to sprawl into.

My wife and I had our first child in 1984. We had both grown up in suburbs, and we decided that we didn't want to raise our tiny daughter in a huge city. Shortly after she learned to walk, we moved to a small town in northwestern Connecticut, about ninety miles north of midtown Manhattan. Our house, which was built in the late seventeen-hundreds, is across a dirt road from a nature preserve and is shaded by tall white-pine trees. After big rains, we can hear a swollen creek rushing by at the bottom of the hill. Deer, wild turkeys, and the occasional black bear feed themselves in our yard. From the end of our driveway, I can walk several miles through woods to an abandoned nineteenth-century railway tunnel, while crossing only one paved road.

Yet our move was an ecological catastrophe. Our consumption of electricity went from roughly four thousand kilowatt-hours a year, toward the end of our time in New York, to almost thirty thousand kilowatt-hours in

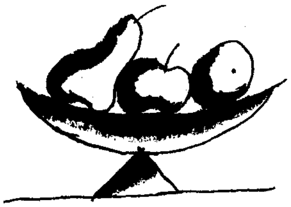
2003—and our house doesn't even have central air-conditioning. We bought a car shortly before we moved, and another one soon after we arrived, and a third one ten years later. (If you live in the country and don't have a second car, you can't retrieve your first car from the mechanic after it's been repaired; the third car was the product of a mild midlife crisis, but soon evolved into a necessity.) My wife and I both work at home, but we manage to drive thirty thousand miles a year between us, mostly doing ordinary errands. Nearly everything we do away from our house requires a car trip. Renting a movie and later returning it, for example, consumes almost two gallons of gasoline, since the nearest Blockbuster is ten miles away and each transaction involves two round trips. When we lived in New York, heat escaping from our apartment helped to heat the apartment above ours; nowadays, many of the Btus produced by our brand-new, extremely efficient oil-burning furnace leak through our two-hundred-year-old roof and into the dazzling star-filled winter sky above.

When most Americans think about environmentalism, they picture wild, unspoiled landscapes—the earth before it was transmogrified by human habitation. New York City is one of the most thoroughly altered landscapes imaginable, an almost wholly artificial environment, in which the terrain's primeval contours have long since been obliterated and most of the parts that resemble nature (the trees on side streets, the rocks in Central Park) are essentially decorations. Ecology-minded discussions of New York City often have a hopeless tone, and focus on ways in which the city might be made to seem somewhat less oppressively man-made: by increasing the area devoted to parks and greenery, by incorporating vegetation into buildings themselves, by reducing traffic congestion, by easing the intensity of development, by creating open space around structures. But most such changes would actually undermine the city's extraordinary energy efficiency, which arises from the characteristics that make it surreally synthetic.

Because densely populated urban centers concentrate human activity, we think of them as pollution crisis zones. Calculated by the square foot, New York City generates more greenhouse gases, uses more energy, and produces more solid waste than most other American regions of comparable size. On a map depicting negative environmental impacts in relation to surface area, therefore, Manhattan would look like an intense hot spot, surrounded, at varying distances, by belts of deepening green.

If you plotted the same negative impacts by resident or by household, however, the color scheme would be reversed. My little town has about four thousand residents, spread over 38.7 thickly wooded square miles, and there are many places within our town limits from which no sign of settlement is visible in any direction. But if you moved eight million people like us, along with our dwellings and possessions and current rates of energy use, into a space the size of New York City, our profligacy would be impossible to miss, because you'd have to stack our houses and cars and garages and lawn tractors and swimming pools and septic tanks higher than skyscrapers. (Conversely, if you made all eight million New Yorkers live at the density of my town, they would require a space equivalent to the land area of the six New England states plus Delaware and New Jersey.) Spreading people out increases the damage they do to the environment, while making the problems harder to see and to address.

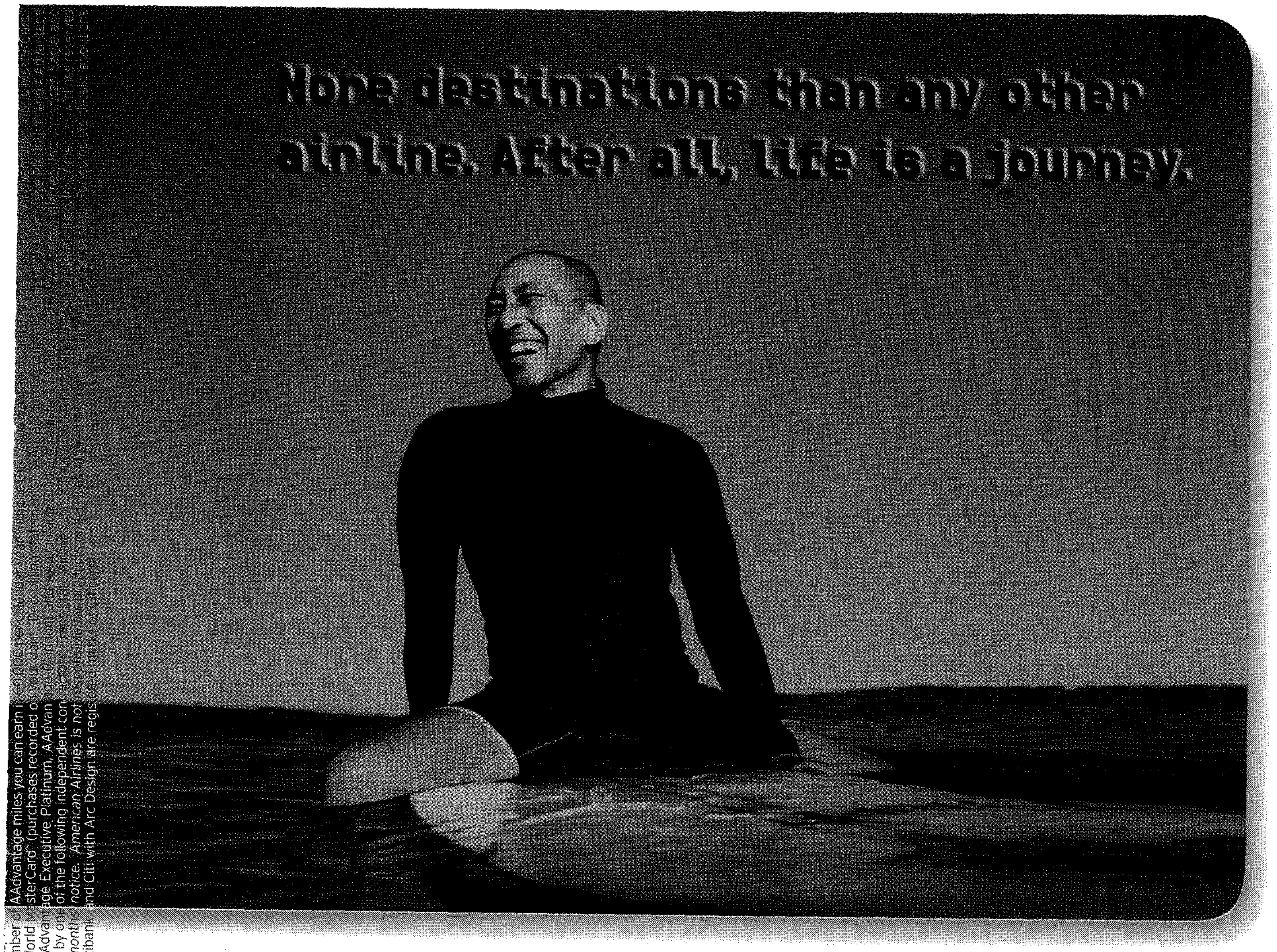
Of course, living in densely populated urban centers has many drawbacks. Even wealthy New Yorkers live in spaces that would seem cramped to Americans living almost anywhere else. A well-to-do friend of mine who grew up in a town house in Greenwich Village thought of his upbringing as privileged until, in prep school, he visited a classmate from the suburbs and was staggered by the house, the lawn, the cars, and the swimming pool, and thought, with despair, You mean I could live like this? Manhattan is loud and dirty, and the subway is depressing, and the fumes from the cars and cabs and buses can make people sick. Presumably for environmental reasons, New York City has one of the highest childhood-asthma rates in the country, with an especially alarming concentration in East Harlem.



Nevertheless, barring an almost inconceivable reduction in the earth's population, dense urban centers offer one of the few plausible remedies for some of the world's most discouraging environmental ills. To borrow a term from the jargon of computer systems, dense cities are scalable, while sprawling suburbs are not. The environmental challenge we face, at the current stage of our assault on the world's non-renewable resources, is not how to make our teeming cities more like the pristine countryside. The true challenge is how to make other settled places more like Manhattan. This notion has yet to be widely embraced, partly because it is counterintuitive, and partly because most Americans, including most environmentalists, tend to view cities the way Thomas Jefferson did, as "pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man." New York is the place that's fun to visit but you wouldn't want to live there. What could it possibly teach anyone about being green?

New York's example, admittedly, is difficult for others to imitate, because the city's remarkable population density is the result not of conscientious planning but of a succession of serendipitous historical accidents. The most important of those accidents was geographic: New York arose on a smallish island rather than on the mainland edge of a river or a bay, and the surrounding water served as a physical constraint to outward expansion. Manhattan is like a typical seaport turned inside out—a city with a harbor around it, rather than a harbor with a city along its edge. Insularity gave Manhattan more shoreline per square mile than other ports, a major advantage in the days when one of the world's main commercial activities was moving cargoes between ships. It also drove early development inward and upward.

A second lucky accident was that Manhattan's street plan was created by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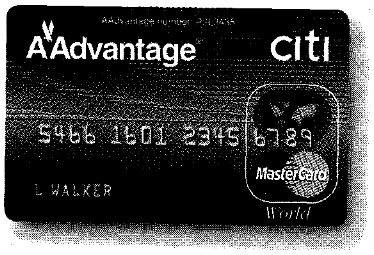

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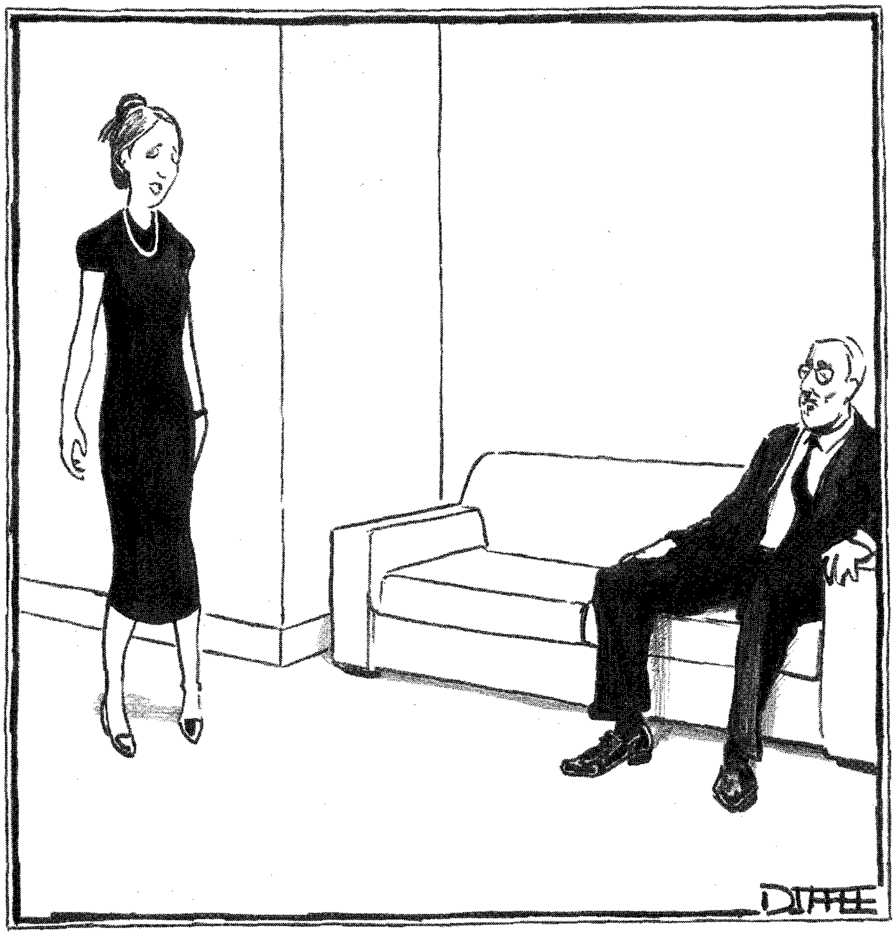
merchants who were more interested in economic efficiency than in boulevards, parks, or empty spaces between buildings. The resulting crush of architecture is actually humanizing, because it brings the city's commercial, cultural, and other offerings closer together, thereby increasing their accessibility—a point made forty-three years ago by the brilliantly iconoclastic urban thinker Jane Jacobs, in her landmark book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities."

A third accident was the fact that by the early nineteen-hundreds most of Manhattan's lines had been filled in to the point where not even Robert Moses could easily redraw them to accommodate the great destroyer of American urban life, the automobile. Henry Ford thought of cars as tools for liberating humanity from the wretchedness of cities, which he viewed with as much distaste as Jefferson did. In 1932, John Nolen, a prominent Harvard-educated urban planner and landscape architect, said, "The future city will be spread out, it will be regional, it will be the natural product of the automobile, the good road, electricity, the telephone, and the radio, combined with the growing desire to live a more natural, biological life under pleasanter and more natural conditions." This is the idea behind suburbs, and it's still seductive. But it's also a prescription for sprawl and expressways and tremendous waste.

New York City's obvious urban antithesis, in terms of density and automobile use, is metropolitan Los Angeles, whose metastatic outward growth has been virtually unimpeded by the lay of the land, whose early settlers came to the area partly out of a desire to create space between themselves and others, and whose main development began late enough to be shaped by the needs of cars. But a more telling counterexample is Washington, D.C., whose basic layout was conceived at roughly the same time as Manhattan's, around the turn of the nineteenth century. The District of Columbia's original plan was created by an eccentric French-born engineer and architect named Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, who befriended General Washington during the Revolutionary War and asked to be allowed to design the capital. Many of modern Washington's most striking features are his: the broad, radial avenues; the hublike traffic circles; the sweeping public lawns and ceremonial spaces.

Washington is commonly viewed as the most intelligently beautiful—the most European—of large American cities. Ecologically, though, it's a mess. L'Enfant's expansive avenues were easily adapted to automobiles, and the low, widely separated buildings (whose height is limited by law) stretched the distance between destinations. There are many pleasant places in Washington to go for a walk, but the city is difficult to get around on foot: the wide avenues are hard to cross, the traffic circles are like obstacle courses, and the grandiloquent empty spaces thwart pedestrians, by acting as what Jane Jacobs calls "border vacuums." (One of Jacobs's many arresting observations is that parks and other open spaces can reduce urban vitality, by creating dead ends that prevent people from moving freely between neighborhoods and by decreasing activity along their edges.) Many parts of Washington, furthermore, are relentlessly homogeneous. There are plenty of dignified public buildings on Constitution Avenue, for example, but good luck finding a dry cleaner, a Chinese restaurant, or a grocery store. The city's horizontal, airy design has also pushed development into the surrounding countryside. The fastest-growing county in the United States is Loudoun County, Virginia, at the rapidly receding western edge of the Washington metropolitan area.

The Sierra Club, an environmental organization that advocates the preservation of wilderness and wildlife, has a national campaign called Challenge to Sprawl. The aim of the program is to arrest the mindless conversion of undeveloped countryside into subdivisions, strip malls, and S.U.V.-clogged expressways. The Sierra Club's Web site features a slide-show-like demonstration that illustrates how various sprawling suburban intersections could be transformed into far more appealing and energy-efficient developments by implementing

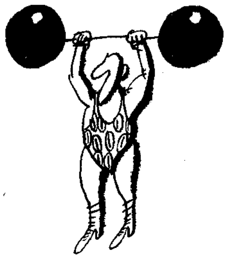


"Does this dress make me look Republican?"

a few modifications, among them widening the sidewalks and narrowing the streets, mixing residential and commercial uses, moving buildings closer together and closer to the edges of sidewalks (to make them more accessible to pedestrians and to increase local density), and adding public transportation—all fundamental elements of the widely touted anti-sprawl strategy known as Smart Growth. In a recent telephone conversation with a Sierra Club representative involved in Challenge to Sprawl, I said that the organization's anti-sprawl suggestions and the modified streetscapes in the slide show shared many significant features with Manhattan—whose most salient characteristics include wide sidewalks, narrow streets, mixed uses, densely packed buildings, and an extensive network of subways and buses. The representative hesitated, then said that I was essentially correct, although he would prefer that the program not be described in such terms, since emulating New York City would *not* be considered an appealing goal by most of the people whom the Sierra Club is trying to persuade.

An obvious way to reduce consumption of fossil fuels is to shift more people out of cars and into public transit. In many parts of the country, though, public transit has been stagnant or in decline for years. New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority and Department of Transportation account for nearly a third of all the transit passenger miles travelled in the United States and for nearly four times as many passenger miles as the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority combined.

New York City looks so little like other parts of America that urban planners and environmentalists tend to treat it as an exception rather than an example, and to act as though Manhattan occupied an idiosyncratic universe of its own. But the underlying principles apply everywhere. "The basic point," Jeffrey Zupan, an economist with the Regional Planning Association, told me, "is that you need density to support public transit. In all cities, not just in New York, once you get above a certain density two things happen. First, you get less travel by mechanical means, which is another way of saying you get more people walking or biking; and, second, you get a decrease in the trips by auto and an increase in the trips by transit. That threshold tends to be around seven dwellings per acre. Once you cross that line, a bus company can put buses out there, because they know they're going to have enough passengers to support a reasonable frequency of service."

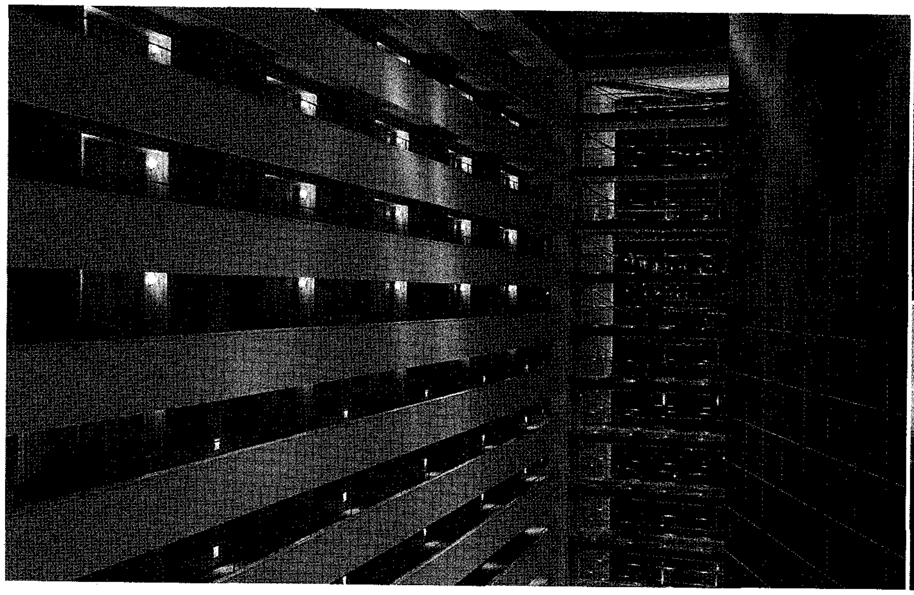


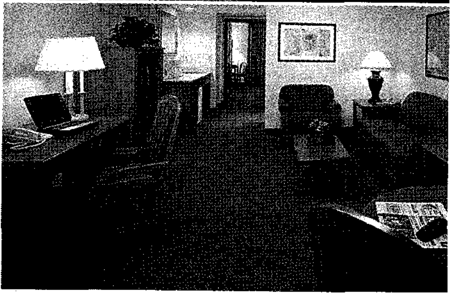
Phoenix is the sixth-largest city in the United States and one of the fastest-growing among the top ten, yet its public transit system accounts for just one per cent of the passenger miles that New York City's does. The reason is that Phoenix's burgeoning population has spread so far across the desert—greater Phoenix, whose population is a little more than twice that of Manhattan, covers more than two hundred times as much land—that no transit system could conceivably serve it. And no amount of browbeating, public-service advertising, or federal spending can change that.

Cities, states, and the federal government often negate their own efforts to nurture public transit by simultaneously spending huge sums to make it easier for people to get around in cars. When a city's automobile traffic becomes congested, the standard response has long been to provide additional capacity by building new roads or widening existing ones. This approach eventually makes the original problem worse, by generating what transportation planners call "induced traffic": every mile of new highway lures passengers from public transit and other more efficient modes of travel, and makes it possible for residential and commercial development to spread even farther from urban centers. And adding public transit in the hope of reducing automobile congestion is as self-defeating as building new highways, because unclogging roads, if successful, just makes driving seem more attractive, and the roads fill up again. A better strategy would be to eliminate existing traffic lanes and parking spaces gradually, thereby forcing more drivers to use less environmentally damaging alternatives—in effect, "induced transit." One reason New Yorkers are the most dedicated transit users in America is that congestion on the city's streets makes driving extraordinarily disagreeable. The average speed of crosstown traffic in Manhattan is little more than that of a brisk walker, and in midtown at certain times of the day the cars on the side streets move so slowly that they appear almost to be parked. Congestion like that urges drivers into the subways, and it makes life easier for pedestrians and bicycle riders by slowing cars to a point where they constitute less of a physical threat.

Even in New York City, the relationship between traffic and transit is not well understood. A number of the city's most popular recent transportation-related projects and policy decisions may in the long run make the city a worse place to live in by luring passengers back into their cars and away from public transportation: the rebuilding and widening of the West Side Highway, the implementation of EZ-Pass on the city's toll bridges, the decision not to impose tolls on the East River bridges, and the current renovation of the F.D.R. Drive (along with the federally funded hundred-and-thirty-nine-million-dollar Outboard Detour Roadway, which is intended to prevent users of the F.D.R. from being inconvenienced while the work is under way).

Public transit itself can be bad for the environment if it facilitates rather than discourages sprawl. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority is considering extensions to some of the most distant branches of its system, and those extensions, if built, will allow people to live even farther from the city's center, creating new, non-dense suburbs where all other travel will be by automobile, much of it to malls and schools and gas stations that will be built to accommodate them. Transit is best for the environment when it helps to concentrate people in dense urban cores. Building the proposed Second Avenue subway line would be environmentally sound, because it would increase New Yorkers' ability to live with-





COURTESY OF EMBASSY SUITES HOTELS

[Explore] *Embassy Suites Hotels*

More of What Matters

When a simple idea makes perfect sense, it seems to have been around forever. But in fact it was only twenty years ago, in 1984, that Embassy Suites challenged the norm in startling ways with the opening of its first all-suite hotel.

The company began with the unconventional premise that the best way to attract business travelers was to find out, through research, what was most important to them before any blueprints were drawn. What it found, according to senior vice president David Greydanus, was that "business customers wanted control over their hotel experience. What they didn't like was being the captive of it."

SIGNATURE SUITE SPOTS

Control meant, first and foremost, more space—a release not only from small hotel rooms with no place to put things, but also from the generally crammed feeling related to the typical travel experience of flights, shuttle buses, and the like. Space meant a sense of freedom. So at Embassy Suites every room, from the beginning, was a suite, and every suite was two distinctly separate rooms joined by a door that could be closed at will. "Our intent was to provide a sleeping space truly away from your work and a comfortable living room that could function well as a workplace. So you don't have to hold a meeting in your bedroom or use your laptop on your bed," says Greydanus. Every suite became a haven of convenience, with a coffeemaker, a microwave, a minifridge, a complimentary newspaper, prompt room service, and high-speed Internet access.

For travelers whose schedules were even tighter than their plane seats, control of time was no less important. The company's research showed that everyone wanted breakfast schedules and menus to coincide with their individual needs and preferences. They also wanted a break in the evening—whether a cocktail with a client or one just to unwind. To put customers in charge of these daily patterns, Embassy Suites did something that was unheard of twenty years ago and remains unique today: it offered, from day one, a complimentary breakfast, cooked to order, and a "manager's reception," which is what the company called its evening welcome with cold beverages and snacks. "That made us the most radical brand in the industry," Greydanus recalls. "Nobody had ever heard of giving away drinks."

The sense of freedom found its signature design element in the atrium, around which all suites were built. Enter an Embassy Suites Hotel and you look skyward, up past the trees and the cascading philodendron, the waterfall or pond, and the inviting seating. The design is practical, Greydanus explains, because "it gives every suite two views—you're not boxed in by a corridor. Your living room opens to the light and greenery of the atrium and you walk through to the exterior view in the bedroom."

LIVING LARGE

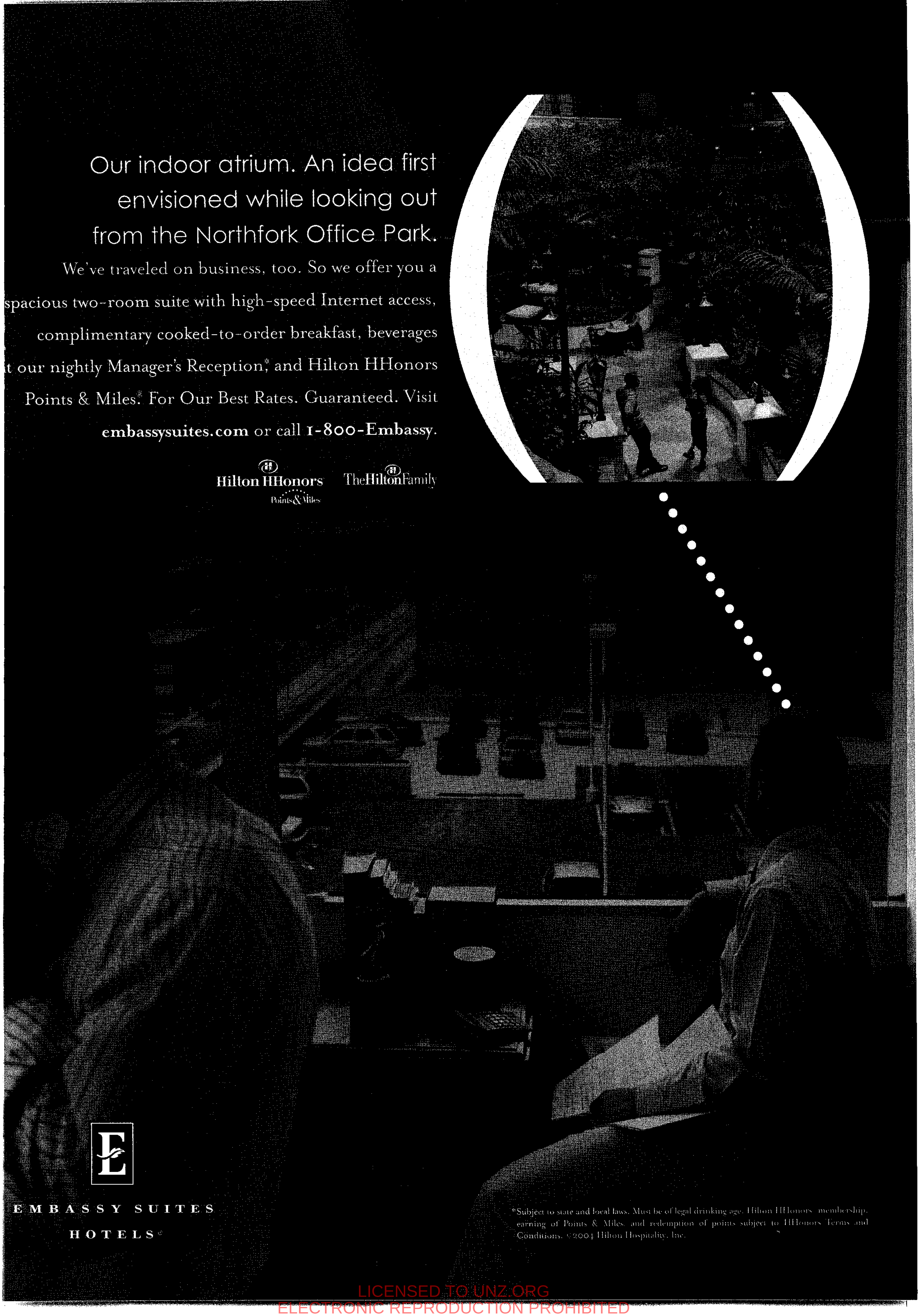
The soaring space also has a psychological impact. It prepares guests for "living large," in terms of scale—for the full-size sofa and dining table, the comfy armchair, the king-size bed (or two doubles), and the two twenty-seven-inch TVs in each suite. And it suggests an openness and a generosity of spirit that still take first-timers by surprise.

"We try to exceed every guest's expectations," says Kris Beck, who as director of food and beverage sets the standards for the cooked-to-order breakfasts and the bar offerings. This means it's perfectly all right to be picky about your eggs and finicky about how your bagel is toasted. You can count on pure Colombian coffee, premium Scotch, and a merlot worth getting to know. "We don't cut any corners because it's all free," says Beck. "We offer the quality customers want." ■

Strategically Located

Twenty years after its first "test" hotel opened in Overland Park, Kansas City, Embassy Suites has 174 hotels in downtown locations, at airports and office parks, and even at beach resorts. The principle of asking customers what they want, and then providing it, has prompted facility enhancements like fitness centers and incentives like a Hilton HHonors points and miles program. And the research itself has proved gratifying, since it continues to show, says Greydanus, "that almost all of our guests intend to return."

For more information or for reservations, call 800-Embassy or visit www.embassysuites.com.



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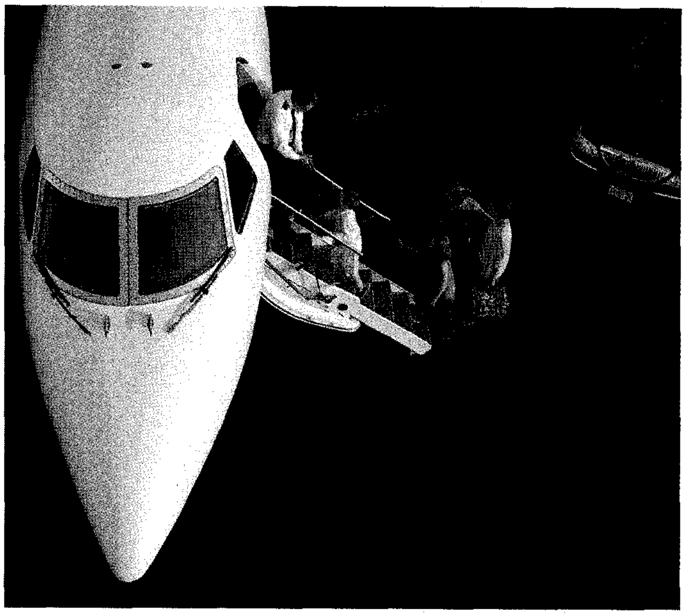

[Explore] *Sentient Jet*

Plane Sense

Imagine a flight experience as direct and friendly as a handshake. You arrive at the most convenient airport, no matter how small, park near the tarmac, meet your pilot, and board the plane. Your meal of choice is onboard, as is your luggage, so there's no chance of loss. You fly to your destination—no layover or change of planes. And when you arrive your rental car or limo is waiting.

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A PHONE CALL AND A HANDSHAKE

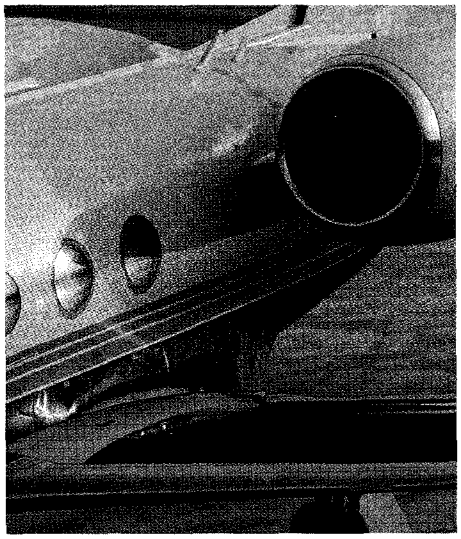
Sentient Jet has a unique approach to private jet travel. It allows its members to buy the way they fly. It is a system of relationships: Sentient has a select group of individually certified private planes, pilots, and operators poised to accommodate Sentient customers' wide variety of flight needs—from a one-day hop to a rural manufacturing plant to a carefree takeoff for a family vacation in Jackson Hole. Sentient Jet is, metaphorically, the handshake, joining its members with the most appropriate jet each and every time they travel.

"We leverage two types of technology," explains Sentient Jet CEO Steven Hankin. "One allows us to schedule planes efficiently by simultaneously keeping track of a wide choice of planes and all of our customer requests. The other is a database of our members' preferences that allows us to tailor each flight to their personal needs." Experts in travel services and safety have placed their faith in the five-year-old company's business model: Former American Express CEO Harvey Golub is the chairman, and former Federal Aviation Administration head Jane Garvey serves on the board and monitors operator, aircraft, and pilot standards.

For members Sentient Jet becomes like the friend who actually finds it charming that you never leave for the airport before the last minute; that you're a connoisseur of fine dining even when airborne; and that you're always driven to make the most of your time. This friend indulges you by offering service from five thousand airports, a choice of six categories of jets, a fixed hourly price, and no dead-leg fees. And this friend takes your calls 24/7.

WEATHER OR NOT

Perhaps most productive for fliers is Sentient Jet's approach to the weather: planes are continuously tracked and rerouted as needed, and ground transport is coordinated seamlessly. "For us, even the hurricanes in Florida were no excuse. We called everyone, picked them up, and flew," Hankin says. "We have to be ready for every contingency. Our customers understand weather, but they have no tolerance for us not handling it well. They expect perfect service, they expect to be pleased, because that's what our business is all about." ■



At Your Service

A light jet, such as the Hawker 400XP, holds six and costs $2,850 an hour round trip; the charge is for flight time only. Calculate the per-passenger cost for the length of travel you plan and it may be less than an airline ticket. For a flight of, say, one or 1 1/2 hours, Sentient Jet offers other efficiencies because "you can do round trip in a day, saving hotel and meal costs," says CEO Hankin. "If you go the regular commercial route you can easily double your travel time with security and other delays." The use of small airports, such as White Plains or Teterboro in the New York area as well as in out-of-the-way destinations, often tips the balance timewise between day trip and overnighter.

For more information, call Sentient Jet at 800-860-2965 or visit www.sentient.com.

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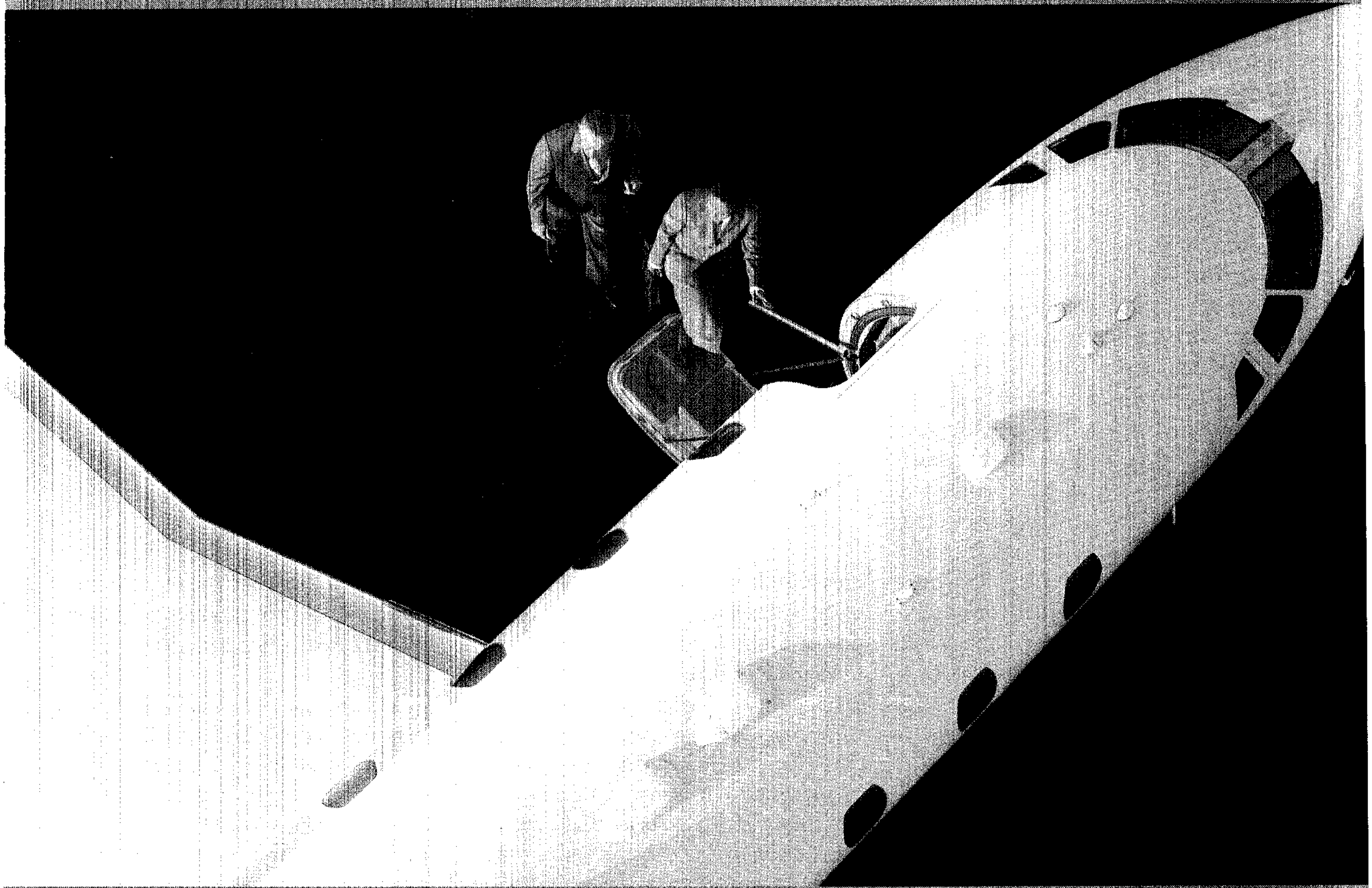

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out cars; building a bullet train between Penn Station and the Catskills (for example) would not be sound, because it would enable the vast, fuel-squandering apparatus of suburbia to establish itself in a region that couldn't support it otherwise.

On the afternoon of August 14, 2003, I was working in my office, on the third floor of my house, when the lights blinked, my window air-conditioner sputtered, and my computer's backup battery kicked in briefly. This was the beginning of the great blackout of 2003, which halted electric service in parts of eight Northeastern and Midwestern states and in southeastern Canada. The immediate cause was eventually traced to Ohio, but public attention often focussed on New York City, which had the largest concentration of affected power customers. Richard B. Miller, who resigned as the senior energy adviser for the city of New York six weeks before the blackout, reportedly over deep disagreements with the city's energy policy, told me, "When I was with the city, I attended a conference on global warming where somebody said, 'We really need to raise energy and electricity prices in New York City, so that people will consume less.' And my response at that conference was 'You know, if you're talking about raising energy prices in New York City only, then you're talking about something that's really bad for the environment. If you make energy prices so expensive in the city that a business relocates from Manhattan to New Jersey, what you're really talking about, in the simplest terms, is a business that's moving from a subway stop to a parking lot. And which of those do you think is worse for the environment?' "

People who live in cities use only about half as much electricity as people who don't, and people who live in New York City generally use less than the urban average. A truly enlightened energy policy would reward city dwellers and encourage others to follow their good example. Yet New York City residents pay more per kilowatt-hour than almost any other American electricity customers; taxes and other government charges, most of which are not enumerated on electricity bills, can constitute close to twenty per cent of the cost of power for residential and commercial users in New York. Richard Miller, after leaving his job with New York City, went to work as a lawyer in Consolidated Edison's regulatory affairs department, spurred by his thinking about the environment. He believes that state and local officials have historically taken unfair advantage of the fact that there is no political cost to attacking a big utility. Con Ed pays more than six hundred million dollars a year in property taxes, making it by far the city's largest property-tax payer, and those charges inflate electric bills. Meanwhile, the cost of driving is kept artificially low. (Fifth Avenue and the West Side Highway don't pay property taxes, for example.) "In addition," Miller said, "the burden of improving the city's air has fallen far more heavily on power plants, which contribute only a small percentage of New York City's air pollution, than it has on cars—even though motor vehicles are a much bigger source."

SMILE

When I see a black man smiling
like that, nodding and smiling
with both hands visible, mouthing

"Yes, officer," across the street,
I think of my father, who taught us
the words "coöperate," "officer,"

to memorize badge numbers,
who has seen black men shot at
from behind in the warm months north.

And I think of the fine line—
hairline, eyelash, fingernail paring—
the whisper that separates

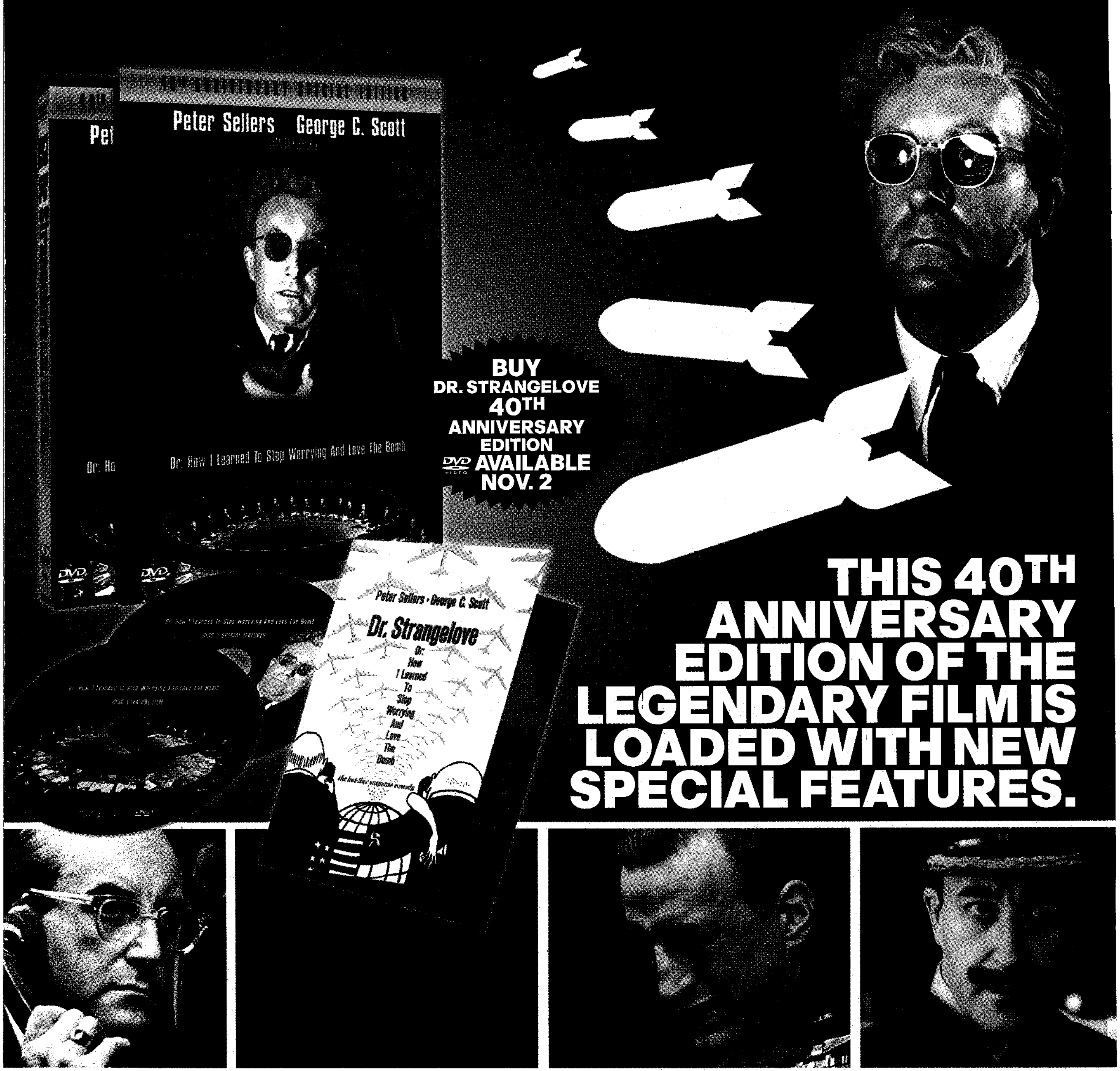
obsequious from *safe*. Armstrong,
Johnson, Robinson, Mays.
A woman with a yellow head

of cotton-candy hair stumbles out
of a bar at after-lunchtime
clutching a black man's arm as if

for her life. And the brother
smiles, and his eyes are flint
as he watches all sides of the street.

—*Elizabeth Alexander*

Last year, the National Building Museum, in Washington, D.C., held a show called "Big & Green: Toward Sustainable Architecture in the 21st Century." A book of the same name was published in conjunction with the show, and on the book's dust jacket was a photograph of 4 Times Square, also known as the Condé Nast Building, a forty-eight-story glass-and-steel tower between Forty-second and Forty-third Streets, a few blocks west of Grand Central Terminal. (*The New Yorker's* offices occupy two floors in the building.) When 4 Times Square was built, in 1999, it was considered a major breakthrough in urban development. As Daniel Kaplan, a principal of Fox & Fowle Architects, the firm that designed it, wrote in an article in *Environmental De-*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sign & Construction in 1997, "When thinking of green architecture, one usually associates smaller scale," and he cited as an example the headquarters of the Rocky Mountain Institute, a nonprofit environmental research and consulting firm based in Snowmass, Colorado. The R.M.I. building is a four-thousand-square-foot, superinsulated, passive-solar structure with curving sixteen-inch-thick walls, set into a hillside about fifteen miles north of Aspen. It was erected in the early eighties and serves partly as a showcase for green construction technology. (It is also the home of Amory Lovins, who is R.M.I.'s co-founder and chief executive officer.) R.M.I. contributed to the design of 4 Times Square, which has many innovative features, among them collection chutes for recyclable materials, photovoltaic panels incorporated into parts of its skin, and curtain-wall construction with exceptional shading and insulating properties.

These are all important innovations. In terms of the building's true ecological impact, though, they are distinctly secondary. (The power generated by the photovoltaic panels supplies less than one per cent of the building's requirements.) The two greenest features of 4 Times Square are ones that most people never even mention: it is big, and it is situated in Manhattan.

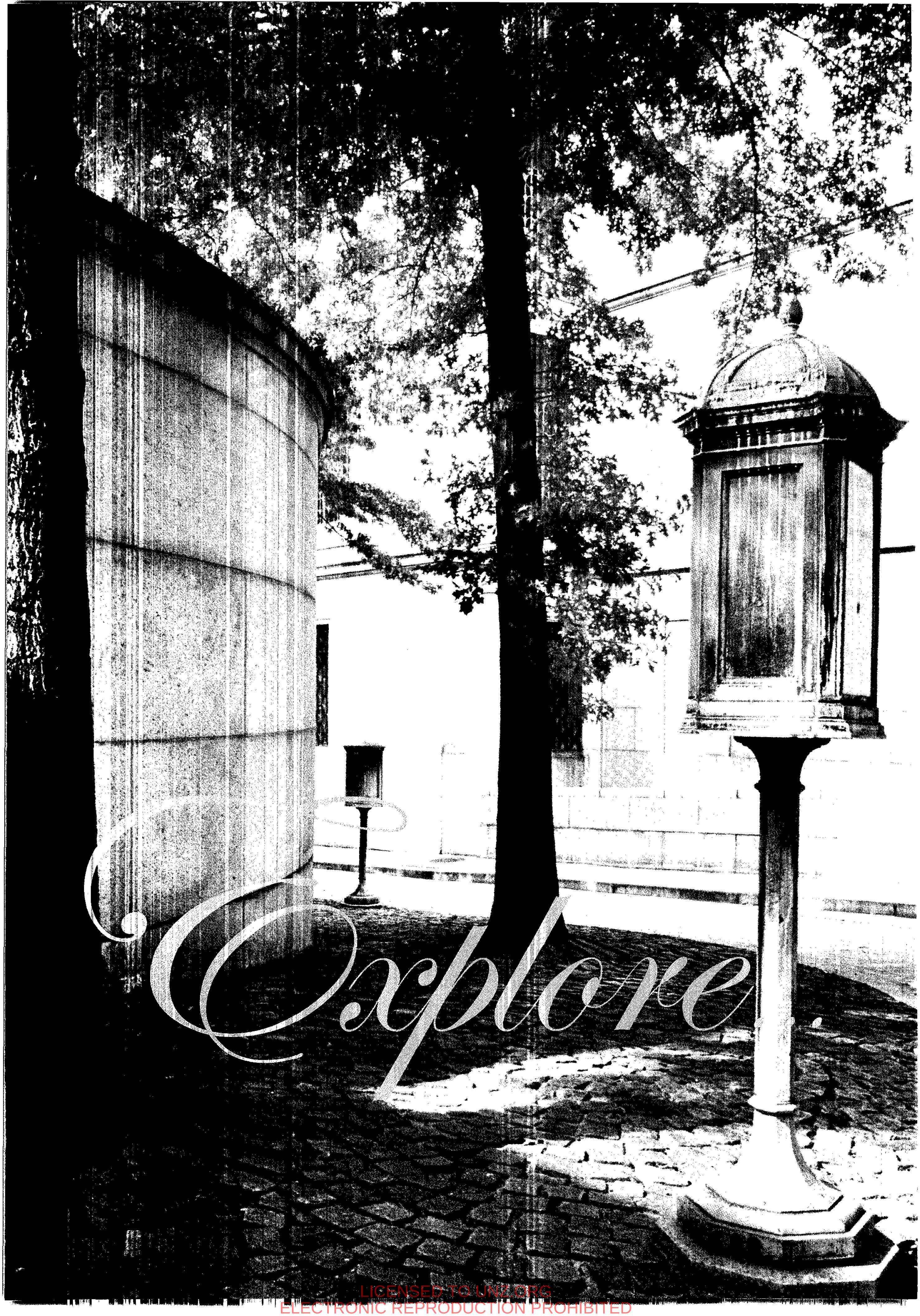
Environmentalists have tended to treat big buildings as intrinsically wasteful, because large amounts of energy are expended in their construction, and because the buildings place intensely localized stresses on sewers, power lines, and water systems. But density can create the same kinds of ecological benefits in individual structures that it does in entire communities. Tall buildings have much less exposed exterior surface per square foot of interior space than smaller buildings do, and that means they present relatively less of themselves to the elements, and their small roofs absorb less heat from the sun during cooling season and radiate less heat from inside during heating season. (The beneficial effects are greater still in Manhattan, where one building often directly abuts another.) A study by Michael Phillips and Robert Gnaizda, pubished in *CoEvolution Quarterly* in 1980, found that an ordinary apartment in a typical building near downtown San Francisco used just a fifth as much heating fuel as a new tract house in Davis, a little more than seventy miles away. Occupants of tall buildings also do a significant part of their daily coming and going in elevators, which, because they are counterweighted and thus require less motor horsepower, are among the most energy-efficient passenger vehicles in the world.

Bruce Fowle, a founder of Fox & Fowle, told me, "The Condé Nast Building contains 1.6 million square feet of floor space, and it sits on one acre of land. If you divided it into forty-eight one-story suburban office buildings, each averaging thirty-three thousand square feet, and spread those one-story buildings around the countryside, and then added parking and some green space around each one, you'd end up consuming at least a hundred and fifty acres of land. And then you'd have to provide infrastructure, the highways and everything else." Like many other buildings in Manhattan, 4 Times Square doesn't even have a parking lot, because the vast majority of the six thousand people who work inside it don't need one. In most other parts of the country, big parking lots are not only necessary but are required by law. If my town's zoning regulations applied in Manhattan, 4 Times Square would have needed sixteen thousand parking spaces, one for every hundred square feet of office floor space.

The Rocky Mountain Institute's showcase headquarters has double-paned krypton-filled windows, which admit seventy-five per cent as much light as ordinary windows while allowing just ten per cent as much heat to escape in cold weather. That's a wonderful feature, and one of many in the building which people ought to copy. In other ways, though, the R.M.I. building sets a very poor environmental example. It was built in a fragile location, on virgin land more than seven thousand feet above sea level. With just four thousand square feet of interior space, it can hold only six of R.M.I.'s eighteen full-time employees; the rest of them work in a larger building a mile away. Because the two buildings are in a thinly populated area, they force most employees to drive many miles—including trips between the two buildings—and they necessitate extra fuel consumption by delivery trucks, snowplows, and other vehicles. If R.M.I.'s employees worked on a single floor of a big building in Manhattan (or in downtown Denver) and lived in apartments nearby, many of them would be able to give up their cars, and the thousands of visitors who drive to Snowmass each year to learn about environmentally responsible construction could travel by public transit instead.

Picking on R.M.I.—which is one of the world's most farsighted environmental organizations—may seem unfair, but R.M.I., along with many other farsighted environmental organizations, shares responsibility for perpetuating the powerful anti-city bias of American environmentalism. That bias is evident in the technical term that is widely used for sprawl: "urbanization." Thinking of freeways and strip malls as "urban" phenomena obscures the ecologically monumental difference between Phoenix and Manhattan, and fortifies the perception that population density is an environmental ill. It also prevents most people from recognizing that R.M.I.'s famous headquarters—which sits on an isolated parcel more than a hundred and eighty miles from the nearest significant public transit system—is sprawl.

When I told a friend recently that I thought New York City should be considered the greenest community in America, she looked puzzled, then asked, "Is it because they've started recycling again?" Her question reflected a central failure of the American environmental movement: that too many of us have been made to believe that the most important thing we can do to save the earth and ourselves is to remember each week to set our cans and bottles and newspapers on the curb. Recycling is popular because it enables people to relieve their gathering anxieties about the future without altering the way they live. But most current recycling has, at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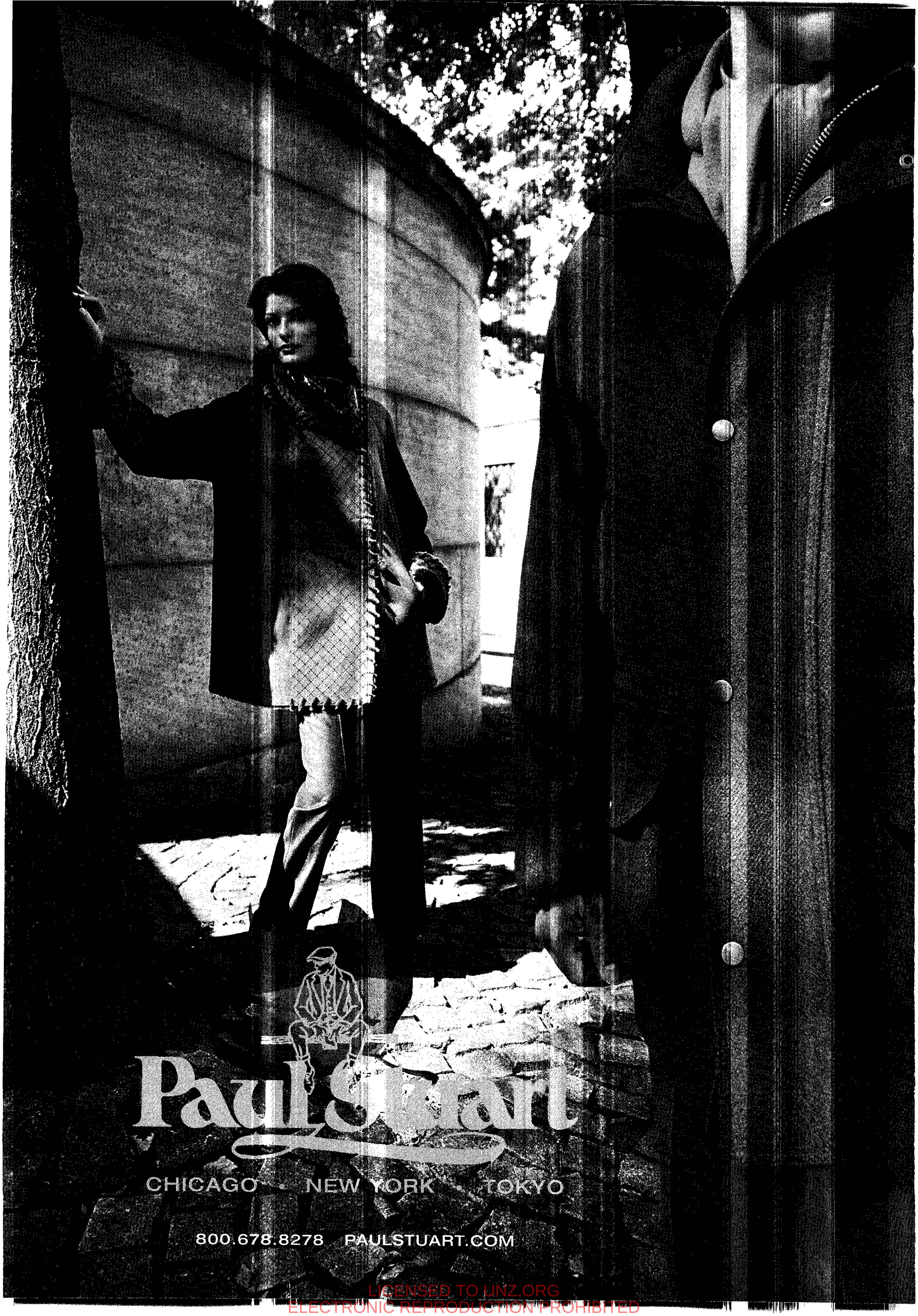
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best, a neutral effect on the environment, and much of it is demonstrably harmful. As William McDonough and Michael Braungart point out in "Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things," most of the materials we place on our curbs are merely "downcycled"—converted to a lower use, providing a pause in their inevitable journey to a landfill or an incinerator—often with a release of toxins and a net loss of fuel, among other undesirable effects.

By far the worst damage we Americans do to the planet arises not from the newspapers we throw away but from the eight hundred and fifty million or so gallons of oil we consume every day. We all know this at some level, yet we live like alcoholics in denial. How else can we explain that our cars have grown bigger, heavier, and less fuel-efficient at the same time that scientists have become more certain and more specific about the consequences of our addiction to gasoline?

On a shelf in my office is a small pile of recent books about the environment which I plan to reread obsessively if I'm found to have a terminal illness, because they're so unsettling that they may make me less upset about being snatched from life in my prime. At the top of the pile is "Out of Gas: The End of the Age of Oil," by David Goodstein, a professor at the California Institute of Technology, which was published earlier this year. "The world will soon start to run out of conventionally produced, cheap oil," Goodstein begins. In succeeding pages, he lucidly explains that humans have consumed almost a trillion barrels of oil (that's forty-two trillion gallons), or about half of the earth's total supply; that a devastating global petroleum crisis will begin not when we have pumped the last barrel out of the ground but when we have reached the halfway point, because at that moment, for the first time in history, the line representing supply will fall through the line representing demand; that we will probably pass that point within the current decade, if we haven't passed it already; that various well-established laws of economics are about to assert themselves, with disastrous repercussions for almost everything; and that "civilization as we know it will come to an end sometime in this century unless we can find a way to live without fossil fuels."

Standing between us and any conceivable solution to our energy nightmare are our cars and the asphalt-latticed country we have built to oblige them. Those cars have defined our culture and our lives. A car is speed and sex and power and emancipation. It makes its driver a self-sufficient nation of one. It is everything a city is not.

Most of the car's most tantalizing charms are illusory, though. By helping us to live at greater distances from one another, driving has undermined the very benefits that it was meant to bestow. Ignacio San Martín, an architecture professor and the head of the graduate urban-design program at the University of Arizona, told me, "If you go out to the streets of Phoenix and are able to see anybody walking—which you likely won't—they are going to tell you that they love living in Phoenix because they have a beautiful house and three cars. In reality, though, once the conversation goes a little bit further, they are going to say that they spend most of their time at home watching TV, because there is absolutely nothing to do." One of the main attractions of moving to the suburbs is acquiring ground of your own, yet you can travel for miles through suburbia and see no one doing anything in a yard other than working on the yard itself (often with the help of a riding lawnmower, one of the few four-wheeled passenger vehicles that get worse gas mileage than a Hummer). The modern suburban yard is perfectly, perversely self-justifying: its purpose is to be taken care of.

In 1801, in his first Inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson said that the American wilderness would provide growing room for democracy-sustaining agrarian patriots "to the thousandth and thousandth generation." Jefferson didn't foresee the interstate highway system, and his arithmetic was off, in any case, but he nevertheless anticipated (and, in many ways, embodied) the ethos of suburbia, of anti-urbanism, of sprawl. The standard object of the modern American dream, the single-family home surrounded by grass, is a mini-Monticello. It was the car that put it within our reach. But what a terrible price we have paid—and have yet to pay—for our liberation from the city. ♦

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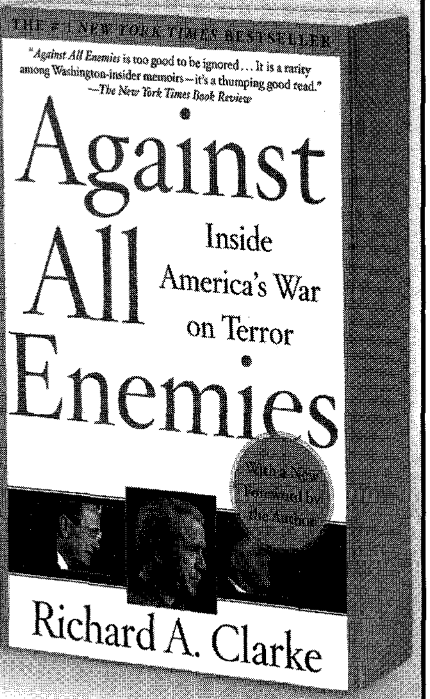
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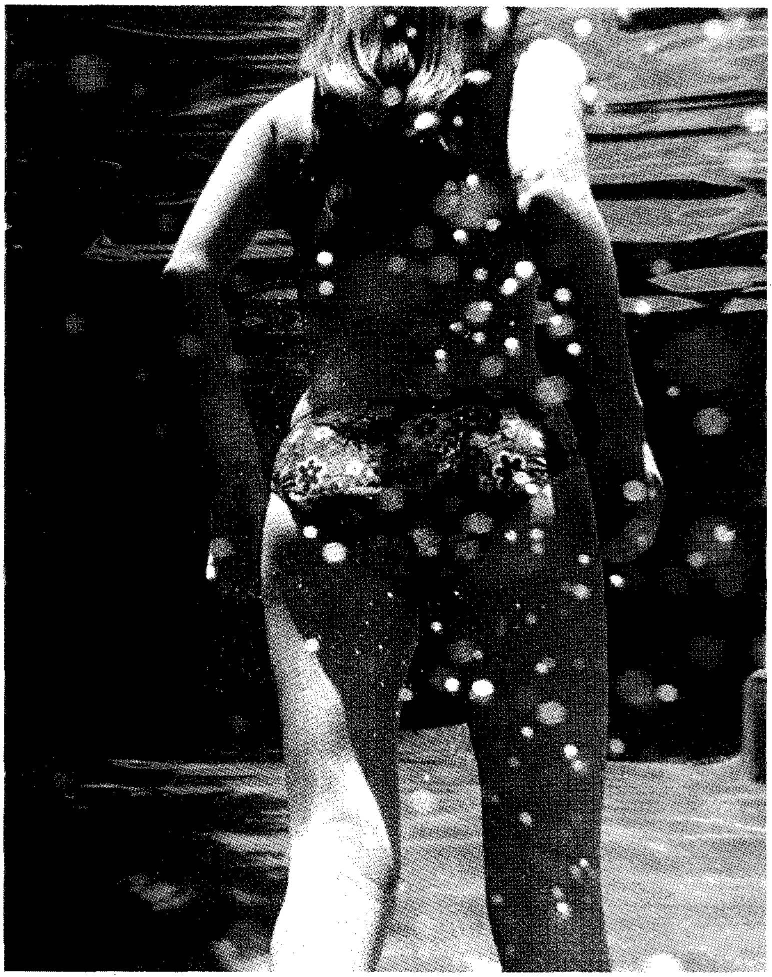
FICTION

THE ALPINE SLIDE

BY REBECCA CURTIS



The first summer I was old enough to work, Jacques Michaud opened the alpine slide. The slide was ten miles from the lake, in the mountains. Over the years, various businessmen had leased it for a summer or two and failed to make it a success. But Jacques Michaud was from Canada, and maybe he thought that made a difference. Or maybe he hadn't heard or believed the stories of previous failures, or maybe he thought the economy had changed. At least that was what he said when he hired us, and the economists were saying it, too.

Originally, the place had been a ski area. Thus the lodge: a low, flat, brown-shingled building, and the chairlift, a forty-year-old contraption with shiny red metal slats for seats. The lodge was in a grassy valley and the mountain was covered with pines. It was beautiful. But the peak wasn't the highest in the state, and the slopes weren't the steepest. Sometimes people came from Massachusetts to ski, but mostly they drove right past, headed farther north, to the White Mountains.

After the ski area had gone bankrupt, someone saw the abandoned lodge and lift and decided to lay down the alpine slide, two parallel tracks, each a mile long, that began near the top of the chairlift and wound their way down the mountain through the trees, twisting and dipping over spills of glacial rock until they shot out into the flat fields of the valley. The sleds were plastic and had two steel runners on the bottom. When the brakes were all the way off they could go thirty miles an hour, slipping up the high sides on the curves and lifting slightly from the track on the dips. The ride was two minutes long, and you flew down the mountain as you flew in dreams, through seemingly solitary woods that leaned in of their own accord to block out the blue above. It was unforgettable, beyond your control, and you believed you were about to die.

People always said the ride was wonderful, but they also forgot that it existed.

In the late seventies, a businessman made the place into a theme park by adding a waterslide. He put a cafeteria in the lodge, a snack shop by the lift, and constructed a craft village—a row of six chalet-style huts where local artisans sold landscape paintings, goddesses carved from driftwood, and candles shaped like frogs. When that park failed, another businessman made a better park by adding the Cannonball, a man-size tunnel that you slid through until you were shot out into a pool. The fibreglass tube scratched your ass, and the water that sprinkled down from above made you feel as if you were drowning. The ride was seven seconds long, uncomfortable, and without danger or pleasure, but women's bikini tops sometimes popped off when they hit the pool and, for a while, the Cannonball worked. Then the water park at Bear Beach opened its own Cannonball, and the slide shut down for good.

We had looted it. By we I mean all the local teen-agers, though my own participation was minor and of a different nature, since I lived nearby and considered it mine. Behind my house, there was an old carriage road that went halfway over the mountain, and when I was twelve and thirteen I'd follow it to its dead-end, near the top of the lift, walk down the abandoned slide, and enter the lodge through a broken window. Inside, I took a good look at the cheap white dinnerware and ashtrays scattered around the nubbly

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HAVE YOU FOLKS EATEN HERE BEFORE, OR SHALL I EXPLAIN OUR CONCEPT?
John O'Brien

blue carpet, tapped my fingers on the stacked-up plastic tables, and inhaled the stink of beer and mildew and the eggy scent of old sex. There were wooden slope signs—"Trigger," "Splinter," "Bonebreak," and "Gunrock"—on the walls, and faded pink maps of the ski area, the mountains, the lake, and the state. But what I liked best was to lie back on the hot slide and stare at the sun. Older kids threw parties in the parking lot at night, made bonfires in the acres of dirt, and had sex in the empty manager's office amid the mouse turds and dust, but they were never very subtle or quiet and soon after they got there the police would arrive and shoo them away.

Jacques Michaud was only renting the park, but he used his own money to replace the broken windows and repair the lift. He tore up the old nubbly blue carpet and put down a new nubbly blue carpet and restocked the cafeteria with frozen burgers and hot dogs, cases of soda, and industrial sheets of Jell-O and chocolate cake. He whitewashed the bathrooms and shower huts and planted cheap, hardy, orange brushlike flowers all around the park. Then he polished his car, a black 1956 Jaguar Mark VII sedan, and made stops at businesses all around the area, chatting up owners and dropping off batches of shiny purple brochures. Toward the end of this he drove to the Exxon station where my father worked as a mechanic and asked him if he had any kids, preferably daughters, who could work at the slide.

I was fifteen, and a daughter, and my world was circumscribed. I was expected to earn nothing less than A-minuses in school. I ate dinner with my family every night at six and was in bed by ten. I was not allowed to ride in cars with boys. My parents had other rules, all with the same purpose: I could not date, or be alone with a boy. I'd never been kissed. I longed to be kissed. I spent a lot of time at home, in my room. I was also shy, and when I spoke sarcasm came out of my mouth.

But I could work. My father believed in work, and he was intrigued by Jacques, enough to go on at length about the park's likely failure. Too far from the lake, the motels. No one wanted a dry slide in summer. "He says he's Canadian," my father said. "But he doesn't have an accent. To me, that means he's brilliant. He seems like a good guy. But I just don't think there's any way he'll make money from the park."

I rode my bike to the interview. Jacques Michaud's Jaguar was parked in the dirt lot outside the lodge. My father had said that it resembled a Rolls-Royce, but to me it looked like a hearse. On the slope beyond the lot, gold grasses waved and the metal towers of the lift glinted white. The wires holding the chairs shimmered like mirages in the heat. A hawk floated in the sky like an ash.

The lodge was so dark that I couldn't see. But I could smell a cigar. Someone—Jacques Michaud, I guessed—said something from the corner. His voice was low but casual, as if he were utterly relaxed. He was sitting at a lunch table. He got up and pulled out a cafeteria chair and told me to have a seat. Then he sat back down. He had a dinner plate in front of him, with the remains of a ham sandwich on it, which he was using as an ashtray.

His skin was dark and his hair was white. Pure white. He wasn't old—or he was, to me, but not enough to have white hair. He was forty, maybe fifty. It was hard to tell. His body was muscular—he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, and his legs were brown, almost hairless, and thick.

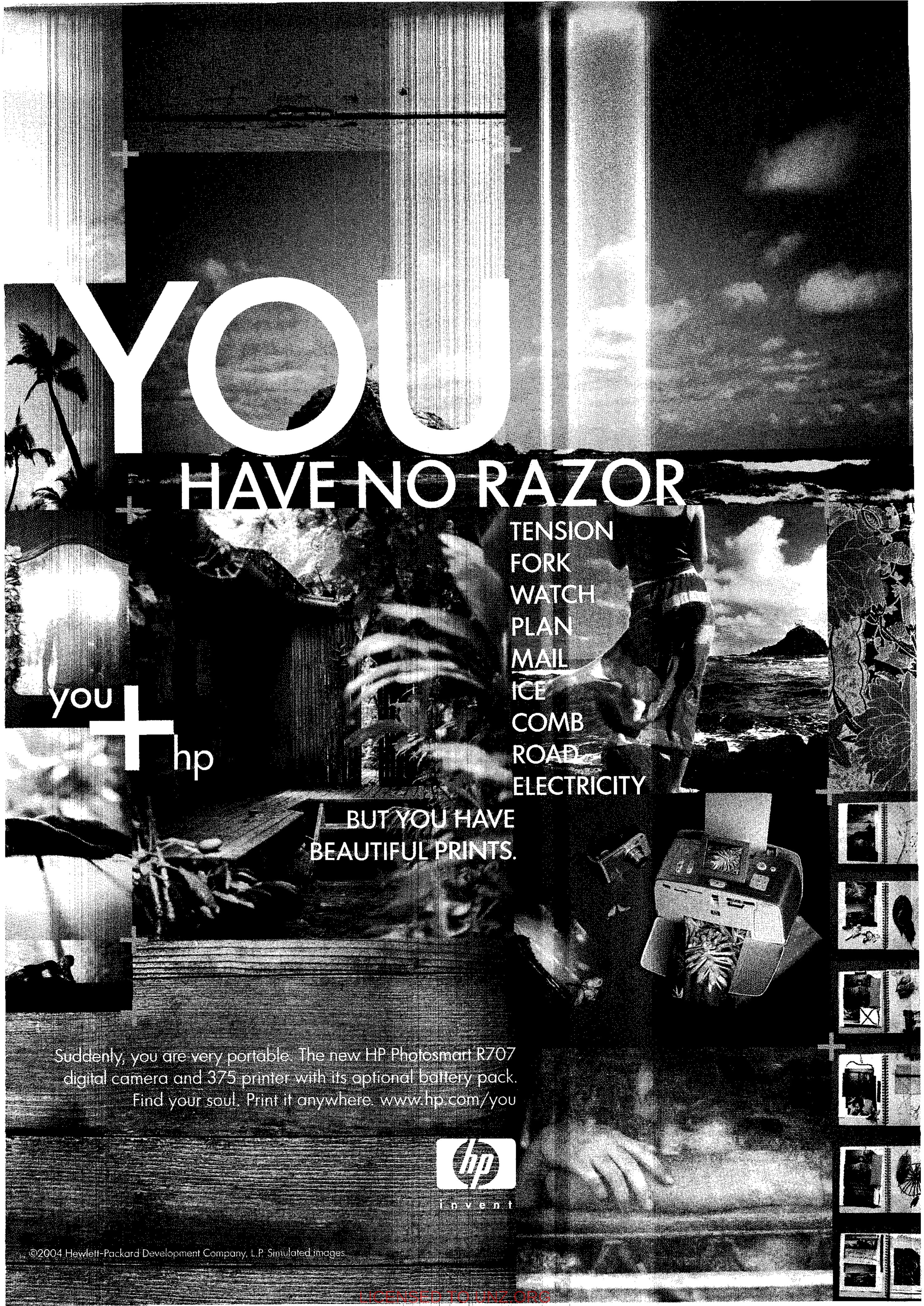
I was shocked that he wasn't wearing a suit. I'd worn black polyester pants and a stiff white shirt, which was now wet from sweat, and I had had a lot of trouble pedalling my bike along the highway in my dress shoes.

"Would you like a cigar?" he asked. He waved toward the kitchen. "I have more in back." He took a puff, held it up and read the tiny silver letters on the dark-red band. He squinted. "They're not illegal," he said. "But they're pretty good anyway."

I considered cigar smoking disgusting and lethal. But I was looking at him and considering having one when he said, "I was kidding."

I nodded stupidly.

He glanced at his watch. He hadn't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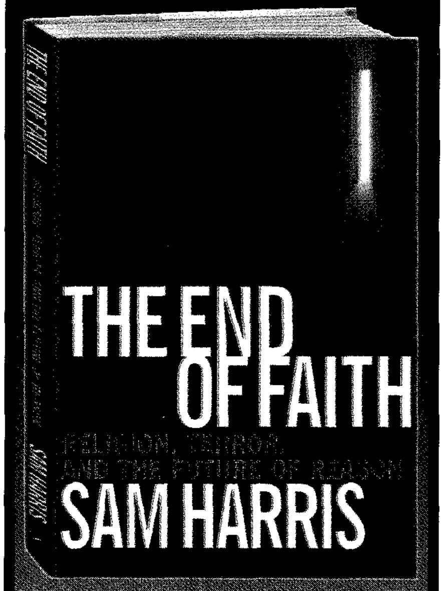

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seemed to look at me at all. "You're too young," he said. "But I'll hire you."

"You haven't even interviewed me," I said.

"Well," he said. He put the cigar on the plate. "You seem like an honest person to me. You look honest. And I met your father. He's a good man."

"He's good at fixing cars," I said.

He leaned forward. "That's important. It's important to fix cars."

I wasn't sure what to do with this. I felt as if he were saying something intimate. But he was talking about cars. My father was a shame between us, acknowledged and then forgotten.

What I understood then was that the world was contriving in secret, with swiftness and accuracy, to keep Jacques Michaud from making the park a success. But, herculean, he was lifting it on his shoulders. I was invited to be with him while he lifted it. Perhaps I could help.

I liked how he looked. His white hair curled over his broad forehead a bit, which made him seem oddly boyish. He had a wide, hawklike nose, a strong chin, and full pink lips.

"Let's say I interview you," he said. "I've hired everyone I need. The law says you're too young to work moving machinery. That means you can't load sleds on the lift, top or bottom. So why should I hire you—what can you do?"

My spine straightened. "Well," I said. "I can stand at the bottom of the slide. I can also sit at the top of the slide and show people how to use their sleds. I know CPR. I could work at the waterslide." I listed other things. He listened without expression. "I suppose I could work in the cafeteria," I said. "Though I'd really rather work at the slide—"

"Stop," he said. "You're hired."

"Thank you so much," I said.

He put his cigar on the plate and came around to my side of the table. I stood up. I assumed the interview was over. His hand came out and I stared at it. "Shake hands," he said.

I did. His hand was large and warm.

"Now we're partners," he said. Then he gave me some forms to fill out and disappeared into the basement.

I was about to leave when he appeared at the top of the basement stairs. "Hey, Bowman," he said. "Do you know what I'm counting on to make the park a success?"

I shook my head.

"I'm counting on you," he said. "You are excellent. I've hired an excellent staff. And you will be excellent, too. I can tell."

No one he'd hired was over twenty-three, and most were eighteen. The other employees were the most popular people in my school, but, because I was the youngest by far, they accepted me as a kind of younger retarded sister. We were bonded by the fact that we all loved Jacques. He was the kind of man who was willing to make a group of kids his friends. This didn't mean that we weren't aware of an aura of failure about him, that we didn't sense that he was lonely and sad or feel glad that we weren't him. But he had given us jobs. He paid us more than minimum wage. And he did not require us to wear uniforms. The boys wore dark swim trunks of their choosing, and the girls could wear whatever. Most wore bikinis. We were given fifteen-minute breaks every three hours, and during that time we were free to ride the waterslide to cool off. The lodge had a bar in the basement that had originally been for skiers, which Jacques didn't open to the public. But sometimes at the end of the day, when the pink sun was lighting just the tips of the wheat around the parking lot and all the customers had left and we'd finished putting the sleds away and hosing down the platforms, he opened it for us.

I went once. The carpet was the same nubbly blue as the cafeteria's—only it hadn't been replaced—and the room had a long black bar, a bunch of barstools, and some wooden tables and chairs. I sat at a table with some other workers and listened to what they said. I was perfectly happy. The bar smelled like incense, grease, and nutmeg. The sun was coming in through the basement window and illuminating the glasses on the tables and the grains in the wood. I could see Jacques at another table. Every few minutes he'd say something, and then he'd sit back and his hands would spread in the air. He was talking to Amy Goldman, who would be a senior in the fall but was already eighteen because a virus had kept her out of school for a year. He was teaching her how to bartend. "At your natural speed," he said. "Don't rush."

She said, "One, two, three, four."

"Good," he said. "You're a slow counter. That means you count to three and a half. Then stop." She nodded. "That's it," he said. "You never need to measure. You just count." He said something else that I couldn't hear, and she laughed. Sometime later, I heard Jacques telling a story. I'd missed the first half. In the second half, a young airline pilot was excited about his new fiancée, who was riding in coach. Once the plane hit cruising altitude, he met up with her in the lavatory. Jacques paused. "And when the stewardess went into the cockpit to ask the pilots how they wanted their coffee," he said, "the old guy was asleep by himself."

"No one was flying the plane?" Amy Goldman asked.

Jacques smiled. "No one was flying the plane." Then he shrugged. "Autopilot usually does fine. In those days, all the airlines had a pretty late retirement age, and the old guy fell asleep a lot."

"So what happened?"

"They got fired," he said.

Someone asked him if he'd been the younger pilot.

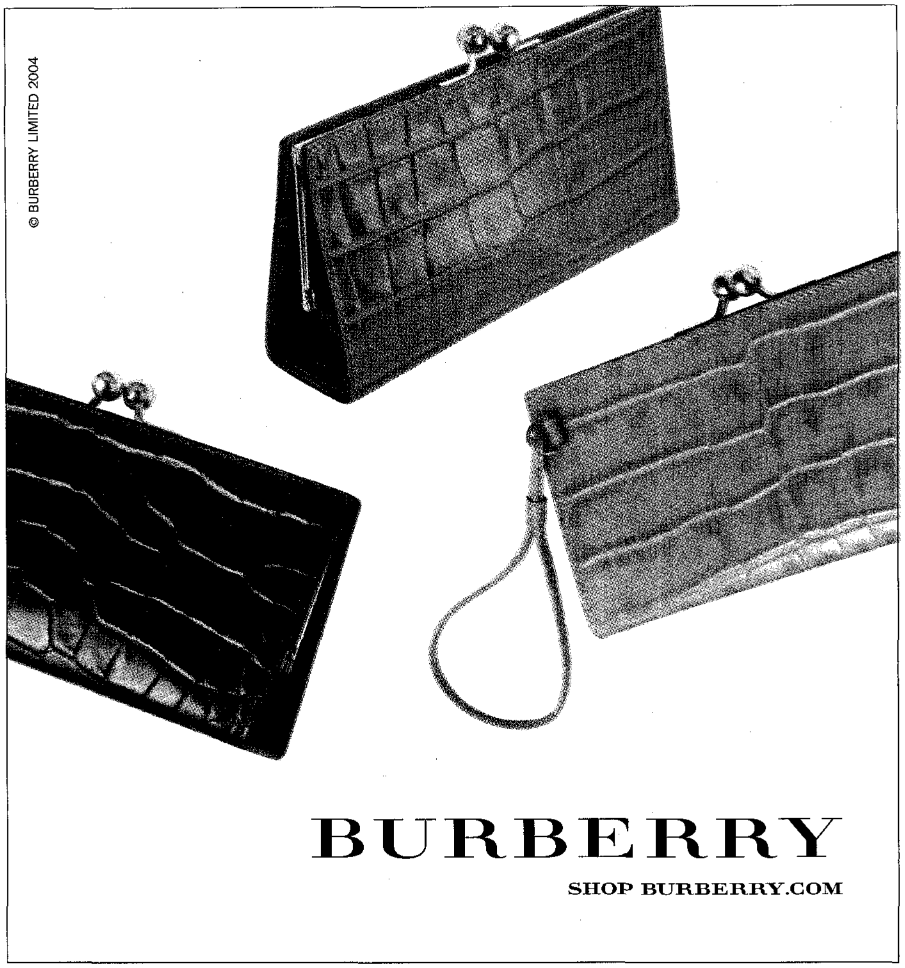
"No," he said. He picked up his glass and drank. "The story just went around."

He went upstairs to use the bathroom then, and when he came back down he sat next to me. "Bowman," he said. He asked me how I was, and how I liked working at the slide. I said that I was good, and that I liked my job. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and said that I'd better go home.

When I got home, I was grounded. From now on, my parents said, I would come home right after work. There was no reason to stay. I told them I'd just wanted to talk. "Talk at work," they said. "You can talk to those people all day."

So each night I pedalled home along the highway, swerving almost into the ditch every time a car came, and imagined that I was back in the lodge telling stories, even though in real life I almost never talked.

I read books. My favorites were the ones in which young Victorian women were forced by adverse circumstance to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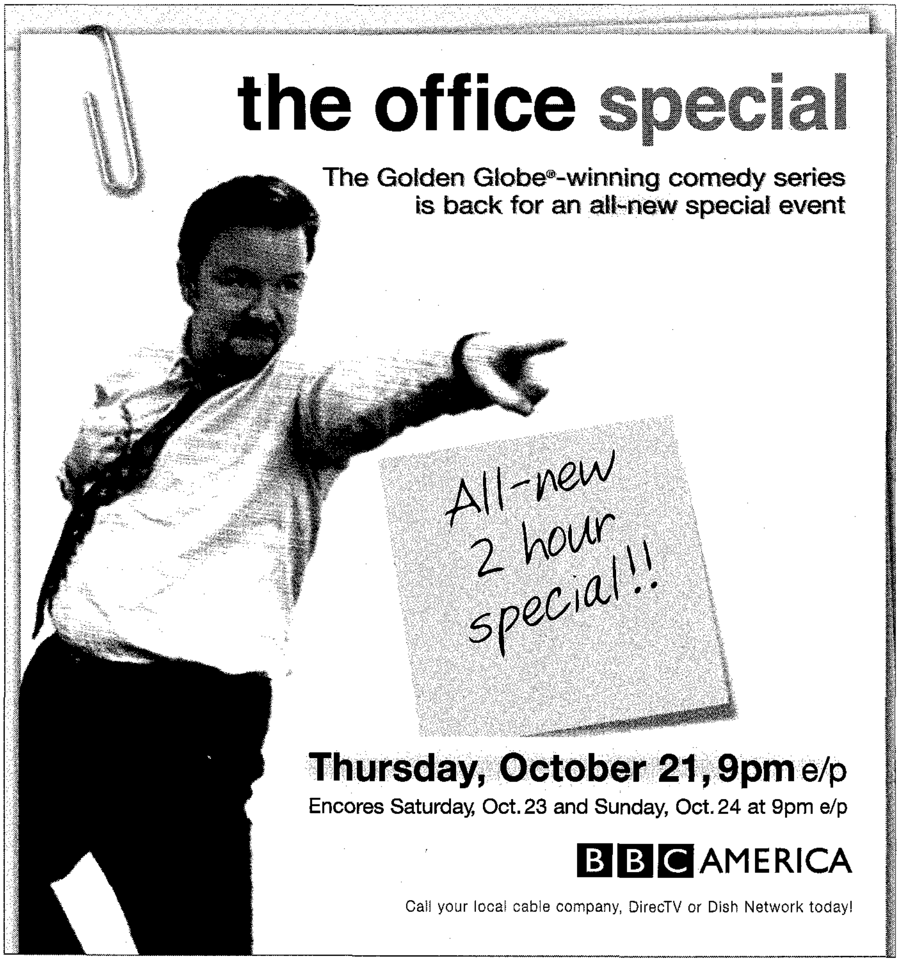
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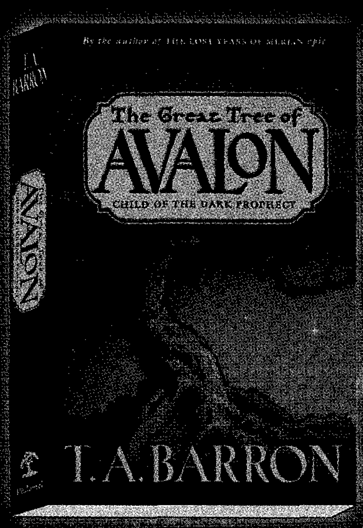
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have sex with swarthy highway robbers who were twice their age and had impeccable manners and great taste in jewels. On the front of these books, the women's shining satin bodices were being ripped apart not by the big-muscled highway robbers themselves but through sheer spontaneous combustion, helped along by the women's rapid breathing patterns. The books were all the same. Once the robber gets the woman alone in his ramshackle but comfortable hideaway, which includes a big satin-pillow-filled bed, he looks around, notes the absence of a second bed, and says that if he were a gentleman he would sleep on the floor. But he is not a gentleman.

She tells him that he is disgusting, a villain, a scoundrel, that her father will discover the abduction and will certainly take revenge, likely with dogs.

The robber finds this laughable.

"It is not in my nature to force you, Carlotta," he tells the woman once they are in the bed. "But I will have to kiss you, you know. . . . "

With one thick finger he compels her to look into his face. His black eyes are smoldering like burning bread. His lips are so rough that they are cracked into segments.

"After all," he says, "I went to such trouble to abduct you."

"No," Carlotta whispers. "I loathe you . . . loathe you . . ."

Two brief pages later, she's pregnant and locked in a tower.

I prayed that something similar would happen to me.

Jacques lived in an empty room in the lodge's basement, behind the manager's office. It had one small window at ground level, which he sometimes threw a blanket over. On the floor was a clock radio, and a queen-size mattress. The only other furniture was a dresser full of T-shirts and shorts. On the dresser was a picture of a babe. An older babe, but a babe—a redhead with an angry look on her face. The woman was Jacques's dead wife. Or that was what we'd heard. Her death had left Jacques alone in the world. He missed her every day. He'd travelled all around the globe. Now he thought he'd settle down. He'd picked New Hampshire because he'd heard it was beautiful. Second only to Canada. He'd seen the park, and it had seemed like a great opportunity. A beautiful niche in the mountains. Cheap rent. He contacted the owners, and had them lend him the keys. He'd carried a sled up the mountain, and ridden it down. He'd made up his mind right then. He didn't see how such an incredible feeling couldn't be a success.

We were not excellent workers, mostly because we were stunned by the pleasure of one another's company. Soon our legs became scraped from lifting sleds, and our arms grew sore and then muscular. Our skin turned gold. Our fifteen-minute breaks stretched to thirty. Instead of half price, our snacks were free, because the snack-stand crew, a lower echelon of workers who were trapped in grease and darkness, offered them to us that way.

The waterslide had an office, a white cement room that looked out onto the pool through a window, and in it was a black vinyl chair that rolled on three silver wheels, the fourth having been lost, some water-stained pamphlets on how to perform CPR, and an enormous black stereo with two cassette decks that played a joyous cacophony of Megadeth and the Beastie Boys. This office became the site of passionate and private discussions, during which the participants leaned a chair against the door and propped a mat over the window.

On the platform at the top of the lift, teen-agers stretched into strange nature-worshipping poses and smoked cigarettes. Their job was to tell customers to raise the safety bar, to help them off the chairs, and to hoist the sleds from the chair backs, but when no customers were visible they sat in a circle on the platform and told dirty jokes and played cards.

The mountain crew was always thirsty and sending someone down the hill for drinks. The waterslide crew was thirsty and hungry, too. As the youngest, I was always chosen, no matter where I was stationed, to make the food run. Under the yellow awning of the snack stand, I'd order three large nachos with extra cheese, six raspberry slushies, three cheeseburgers, and five chili dogs. The server would pack everything into a shallow cardboard box, and I'd give him the soft, ripped bills

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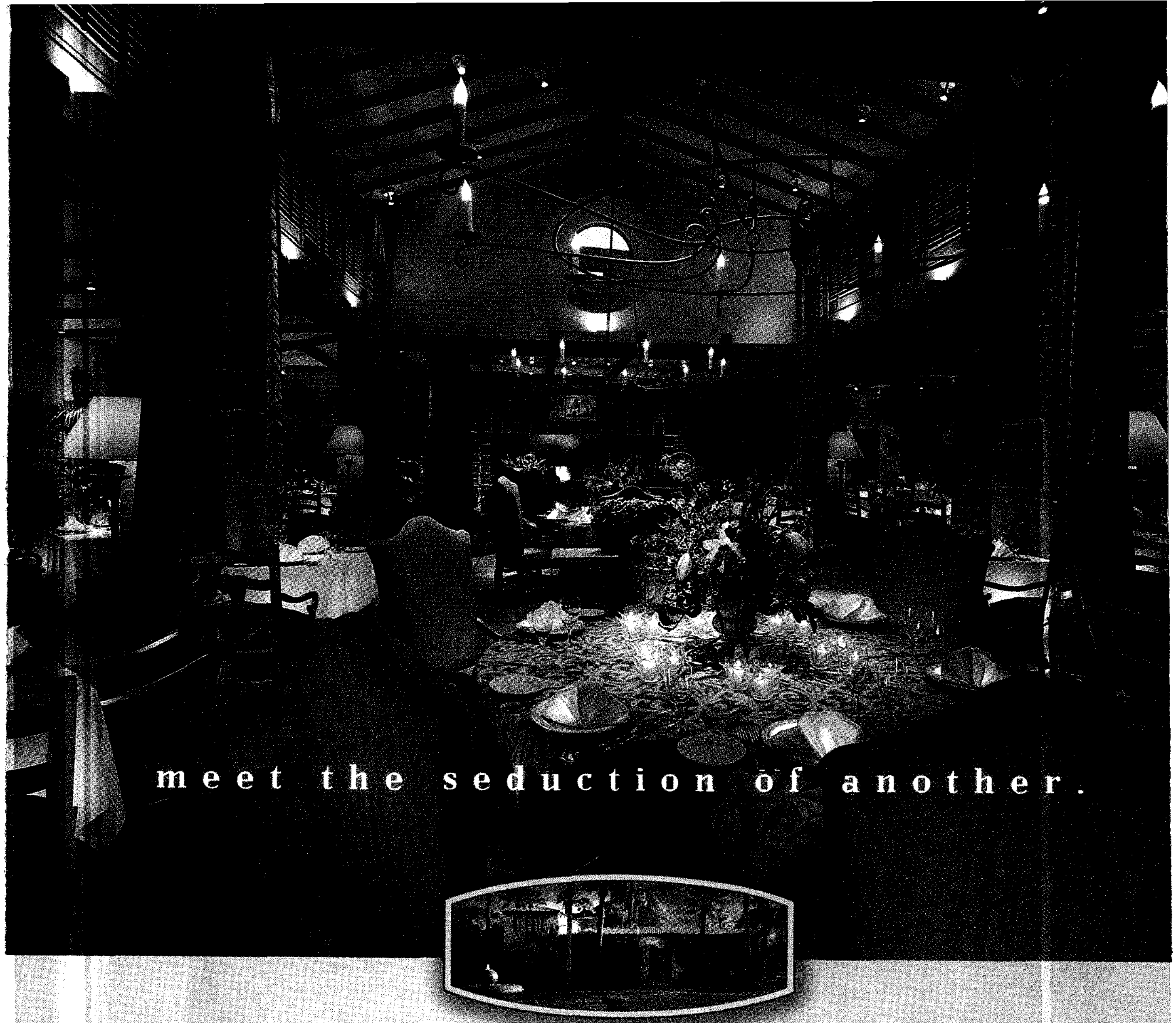

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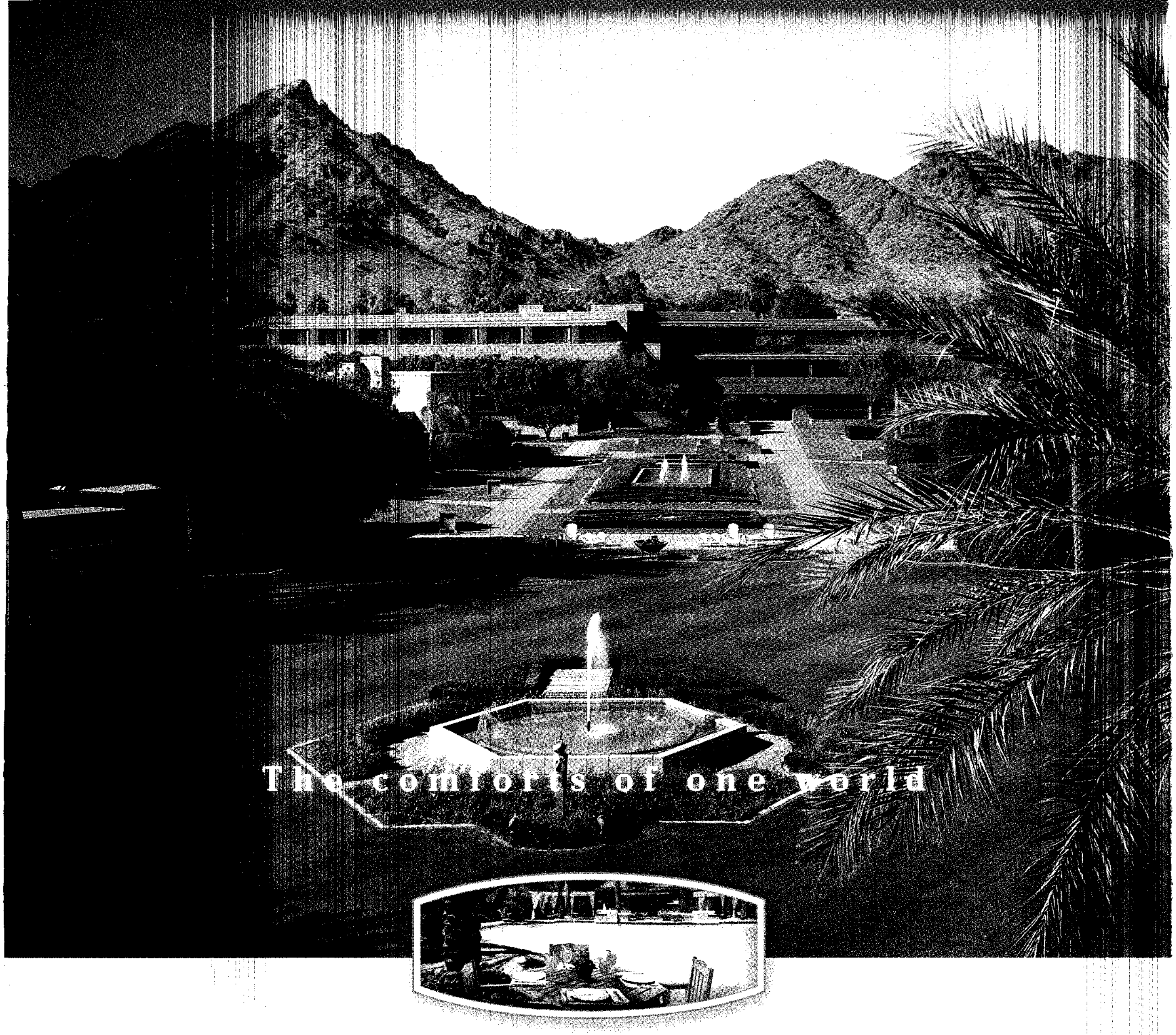

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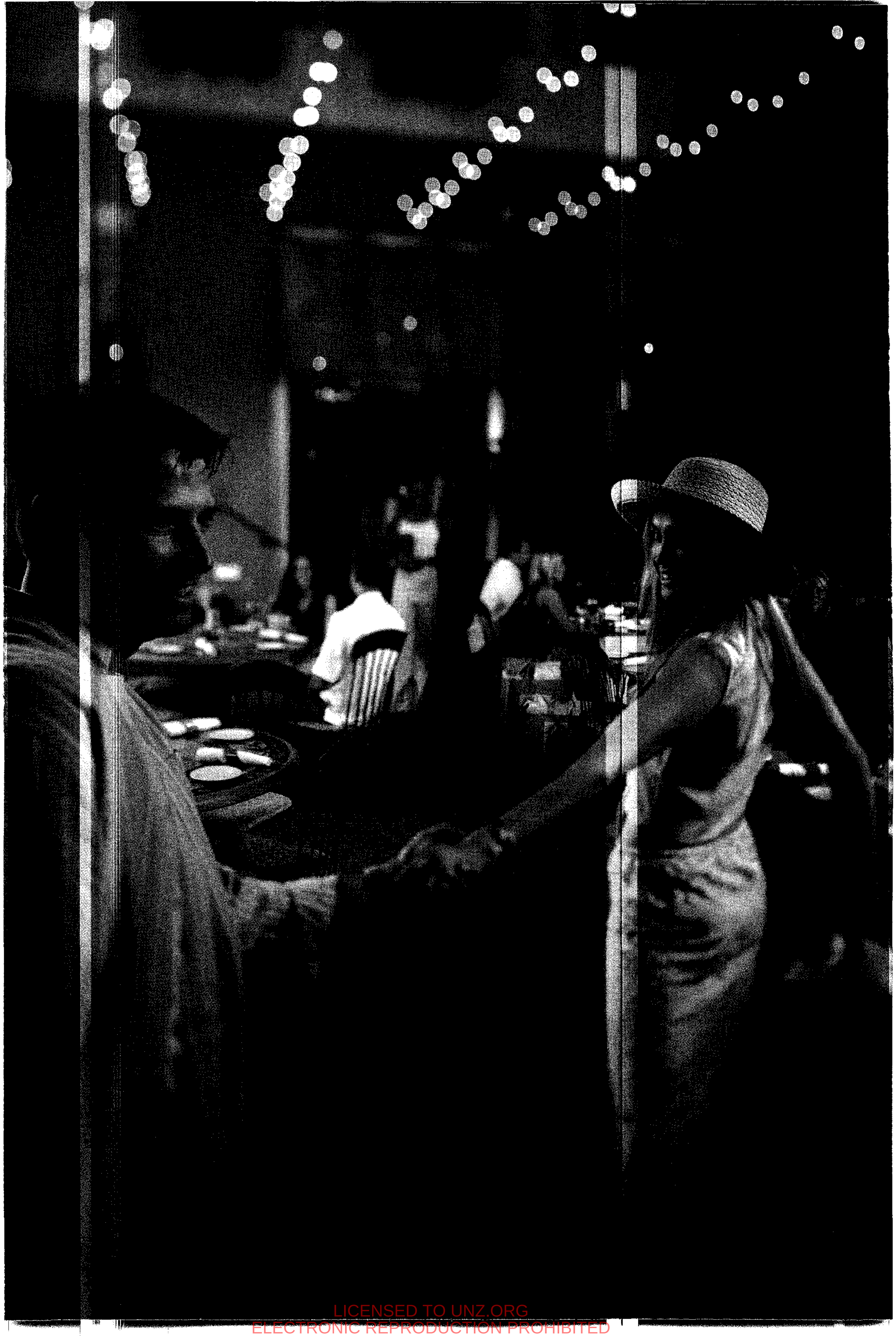

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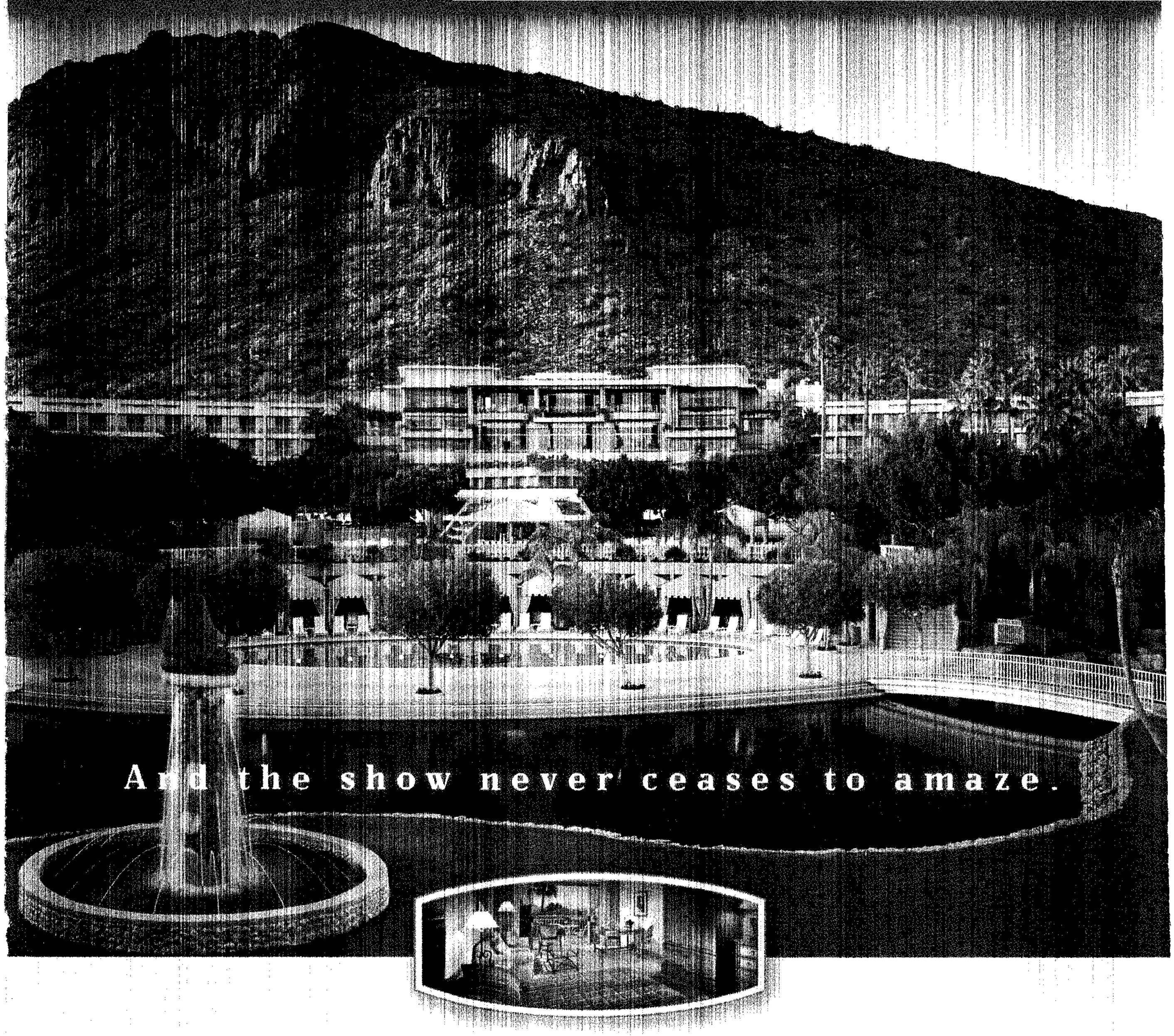

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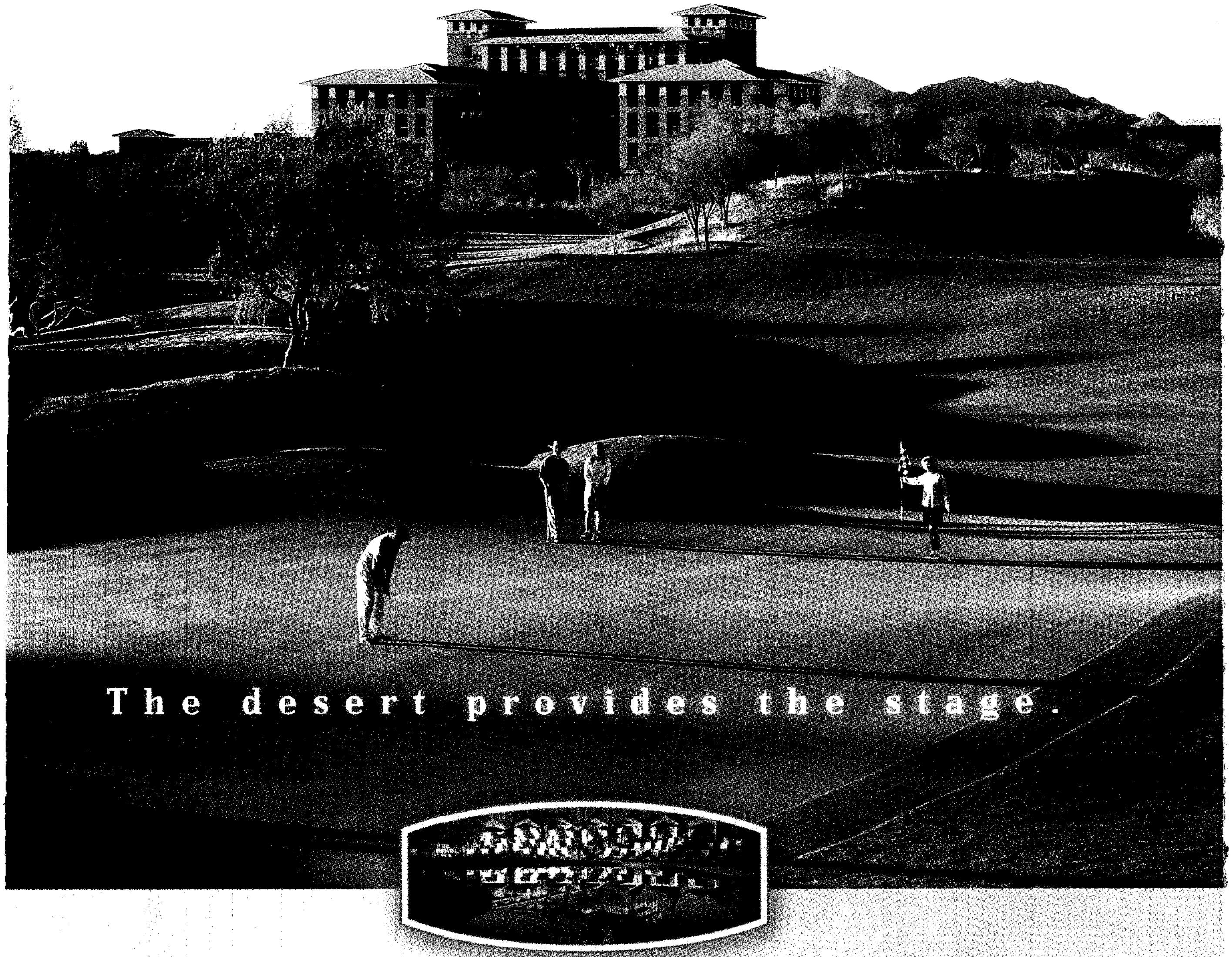

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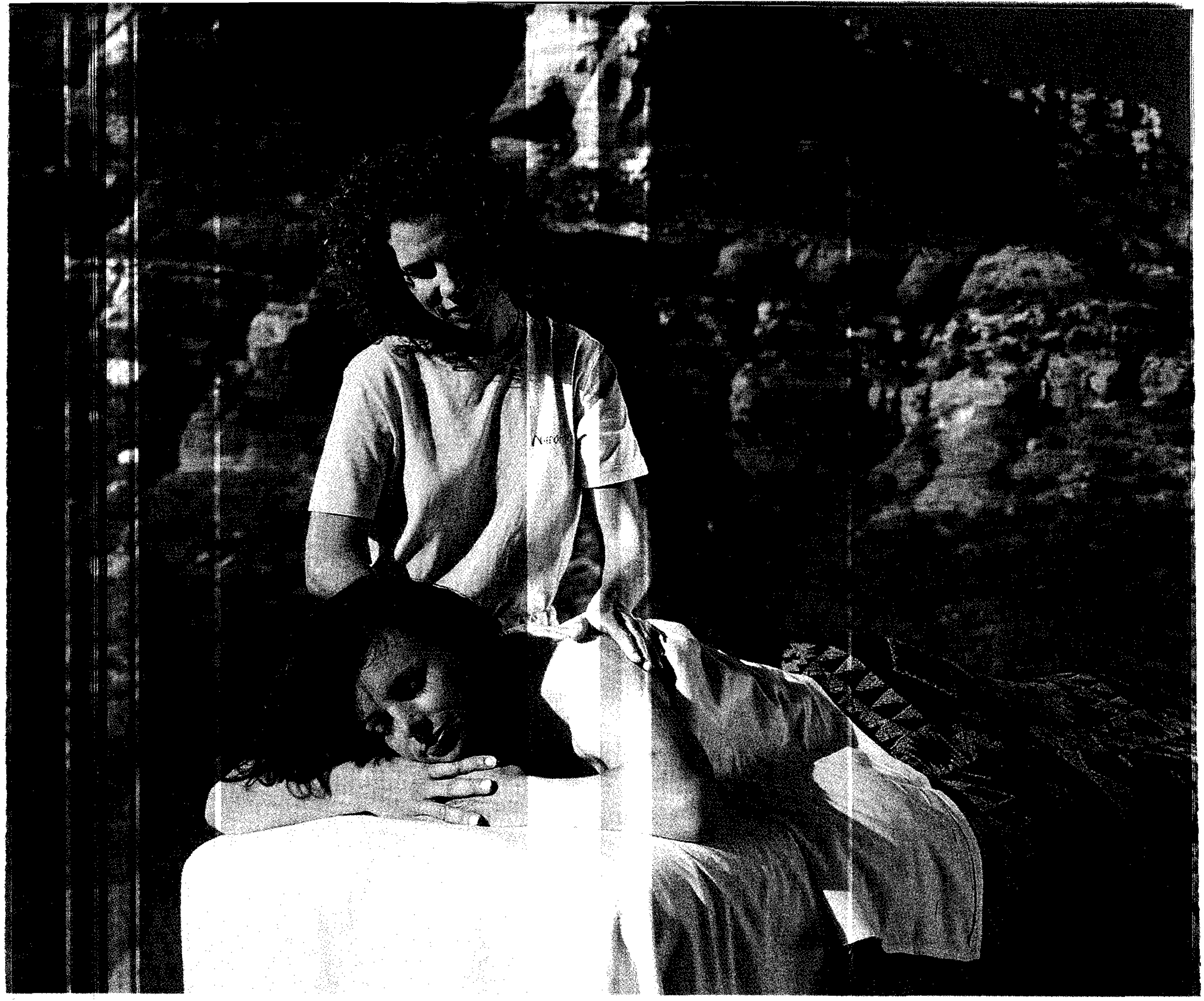

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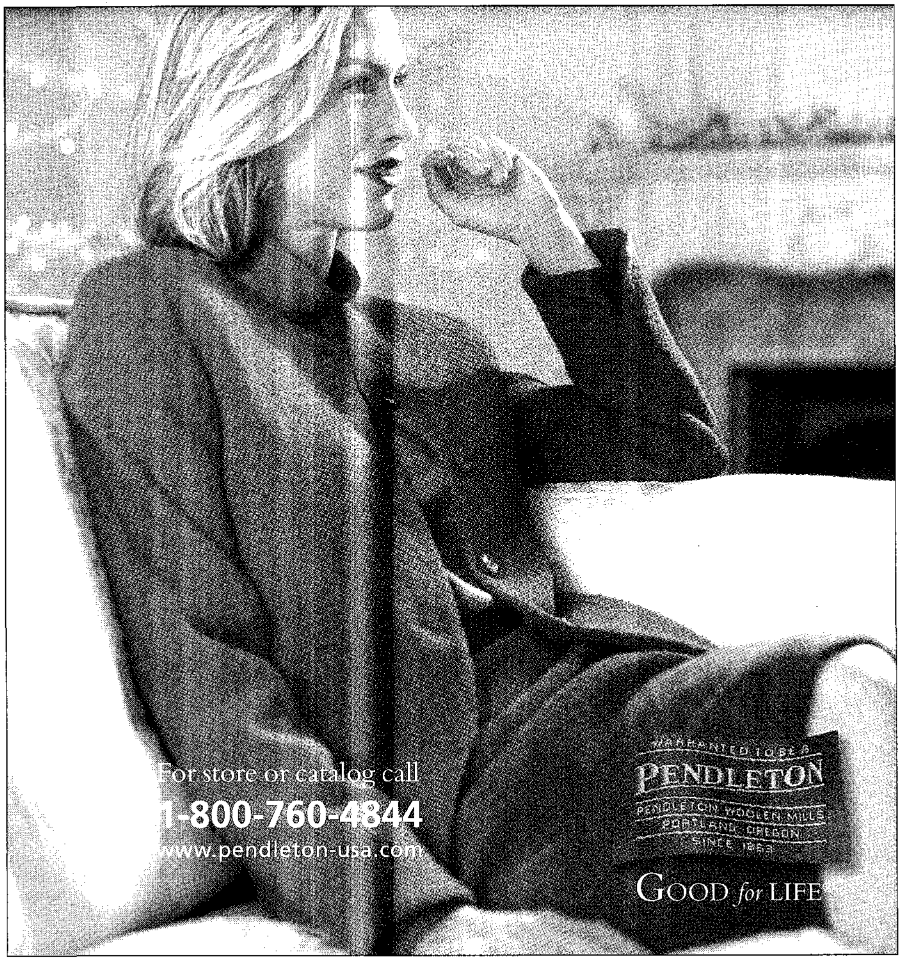
I'd collected. He'd push them back. On my return along the sandy path to the slide, Jacques sometimes passed by, walking slowly, wearing shorts and an old polo shirt, tight under the arms. He'd look up and nod, appearing to see only me, not the box.

I wondered how he could notice so little. I guessed he was preoccupied. He'd hoped we'd have six hundred people a day, and we hadn't yet. He was always chatting up the customers and making lists of needed supplies, and every day at noon he drove to a different neighboring town to distribute brochures. He kept a few in the pockets of his shorts, and sometimes he'd absentmindedly shove them farther in, because the tips stuck out. He'd had them printed himself, and on the front was a picture of Amy Goldman. I could understand why. She was the most glamorous, if not the most beautiful, girl in school. Within a week of the park's opening, she was dating Dave Z., the assistant manager and second-oldest employee of the park. He was going back to college in the fall, and she had another year of high school, so by necessity it was a turbulent and passionate affair, one that touched us all. Dave Z. had blond hair and a deadly smile full of teeth. He never spoke to us except to tell us to do something, and then he called us kids. It seemed fitting and tragic that Amy Goldman should be his. She was a blond goddess—five feet eight with strong legs, a waist like a man's neck, and breasts as big as they could possibly be without being too big. Her posture was as straight as if she were walking at sea. Her skin was bruised apricot, her nose hooked, and her eyes green. Her smile could make any of us agree to perform the dingiest tasks—spraying down the concrete floors of the bathrooms, for example, or cleaning up a shit someone had taken on the men's-room floor. At the waterslide, she always wore a red bikini, and when she leaned forward to blow her whistle or tell a child to move away from the bottom of the slide there was an ever so slight bulge of flesh beneath her breasts.

She and Dave Z. did it in the waterslide office on the black vinyl chair. They did it in the showers on a cloudy afternoon. They did it in Jacques Michaud's



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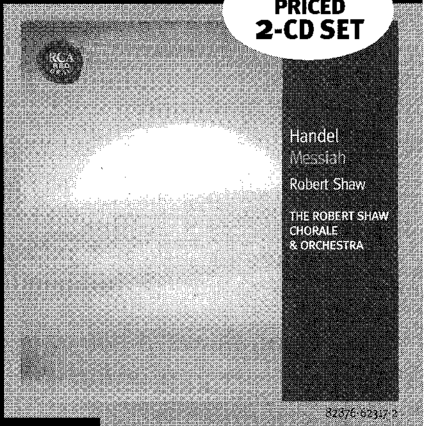

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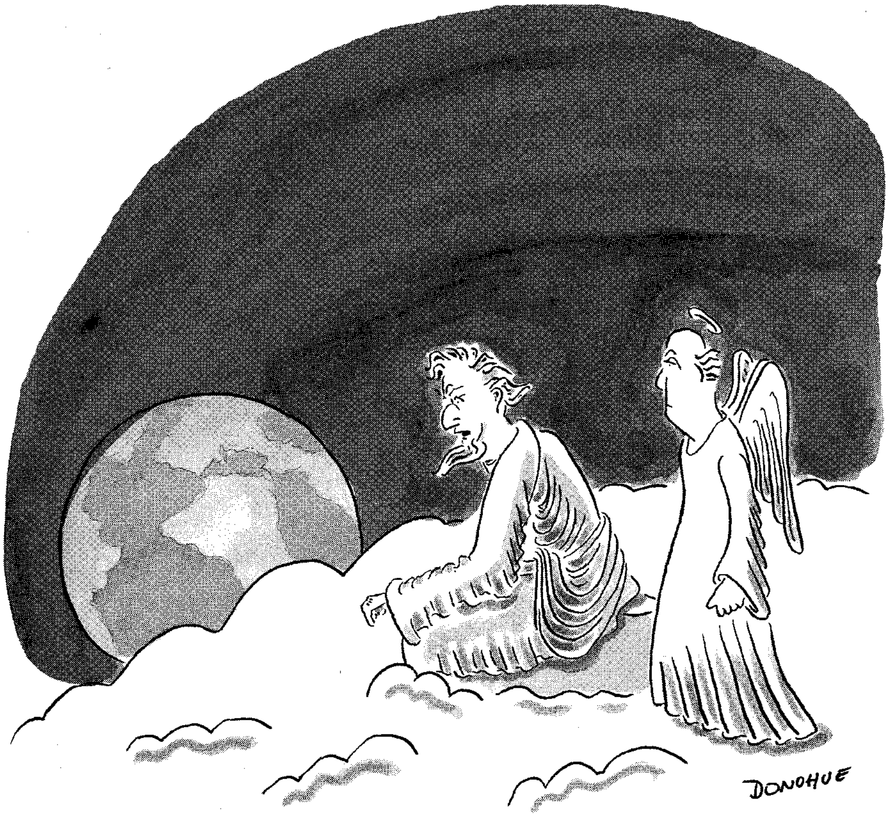


"Maybe things would have turned out better if I'd put in a whole week."

office, on his desk, when Jacques Michaud wasn't there.

Jacques Michaud was oblivious. He walked around the sandy paths of the park with his head down, looking for pieces of glass. When he looked up, he seemed to be staring at a lone house—the local millionaire's—on the pine-covered mountain opposite.

Occasionally, Amy and I worked together at the top of the slide. Because I couldn't work the lift, I spent a lot of time up there—in a high, sunny, sandy clearing, surrounded by white pines and hemlocks and scraggly junipers—showing the people who emerged from the path in the woods how to use their sleds. One afternoon, it was slow, and Amy and I were left sitting in the sun by ourselves. She was wearing her bathing suit to tan.

I asked her what the virus was that had kept her out of school for a year. She said the doctors had had about five different explanations and that none of them had made sense, that they'd tested her for everything, even syphilis. Sometimes her arm had been numb, or her leg, off and on, for a night or a day; and she'd felt tired. One doctor had told her that it was growing pains. Another had said that she was depressed. She laughed and said that it didn't matter now, because she was fine.

She took a carrot stick out of a Baggie and offered me one.

"It made me realize that I should study more," she said. "Once I get to college, I'm going to study all the time."

She tucked her hair behind her ears and smiled. Her cheeks were round when she smiled, and she suddenly seemed very young. I smiled, too, for no reason, and a bunch of kids came out of the woods with their sleds, laughing and shouting, then stood by the slide for five minutes arguing over who was faster. They made us count down for them so that they could race, in sets of two. After they left, it was quiet. Two dark-blue dragonflies sloped through the clearing. I stared at the red berries on the junipers, the shiny green leaves of the checkerberries below—and then I asked her when Jacques had taken the picture for the brochure. She said a few days before the park opened. I asked her if he'd paid her to do it. She shrugged and said that he'd offered, but she'd said no. She didn't see why he should. "It wasn't a big thing," she said.

"Did he take it himself?" I asked.

She stared at me. "Of course he took it himself. He's not a millionaire." She frowned a bit. "He was very sweet," she said. "It wasn't weird."

I nodded. Then she asked me if I had a boyfriend. I shook my head.

"Well, you're not missing anything," she said. "It's a pain in the ass."

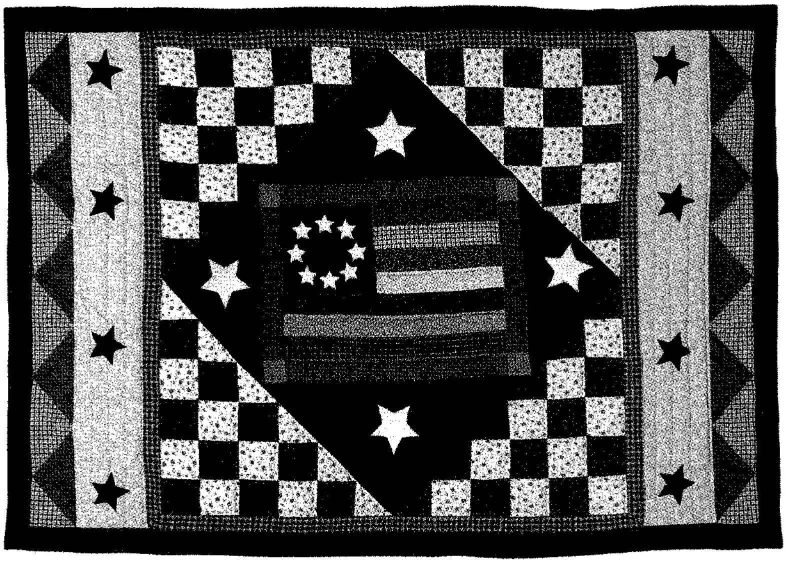
I nodded.

She leaned back and closed her eyes.

By late June, we didn't have six hundred people a day. We didn't have five hundred. For three days it rained, and when the sun came back the chairlift malfunctioned and for two days Jacques sold half-price tickets.

My father tallied the gross income from three hundred customers a day on the back of our electric bill, subtracting estimated employee incomes and making various other columns under an all-caps heading, "OVERHEAD," and concluded that Jacques couldn't be making a profit.

But I thought he was. He had an air of contentment. He spent every morning checking the mechanics of the slide, and he was especially careful about the sleds. He made the maintenance guys check every sled every day—Were the runners straight? Did the brakes work?—which seemed excessive, since each rider had to check the brakes before heading down, and, besides, you didn't need brakes. A ride without brakes was a wild ride. We'd all done it, and we all had slide burn as a result. It was a strange wound. Only the first few layers of skin, whatever portion had skimmed the slide—usually the knees or the backs of the arms or thighs—were affected, and the burns didn't bleed; they oozed pink fluid. They could be as large as a hand or as small as a dime, and they hurt, but only until the E.M.T. in the emergency shack put the iodine on. Then they stung for an instant and pulsed for a few days. Soon they faded to a slippery shine, a pale shade of lilac, and they seemed to travel, so that months later you'd be looking for one, to show someone, and it would be somewhere else on your arm,



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somewhere different from where it had been. Or maybe you'd just remembered it wrong.

Jacques caught me pushing one of mine with a thumb one day when I was working at the bottom of the slide. The day was slow, and everything smelled like heat: the slide, my skin, the dirt that slid along the ground in the breeze. Jacques grabbed my arm, glanced at the burn, and said that it was pretty good. Then he stood next to me and looked around the park. A group of maintenance guys were shuffling by on their way to the sled-repair shack, where they got high between jobs. Jacques watched them go. His feet were spread wide in the dirt and he crossed his arms over his damp shirt. Then he asked me which one of them I had a crush on.

I looked at them. They were all gaunt, except for one, who had dark hair, a paunch, and a soft, dopey look. I shrugged.

"I know," he said. "I know."

I watched him walk off toward the waterslide. When he got there, he waved to the people by the pool, of which there were only two, because Amy Goldman and Dave Z. weren't present. Jacques stopped in front of the closed office door. The mat was over the window. He stood there, looking at the mat, for about ten seconds. Then he turned around. He glanced at the chubby, sunburned lifeguard who'd stood up from his stool out of nervousness. "Wrong office," he said. He turned when he was halfway down the ramp. "If you see Dave Z.," he said, "tell him to stop by and see me."

Dave Z. wouldn't tell anyone what Jacques said that day. But after that he made small talk with the customers, cleaned his nails when he thought no one was looking, and said "Please" and "Thank you" when he told us to do something.

On the last day of June, we had a hundred and thirty-two guests. Jacques stopped me as I was delivering a box of cheeseburgers to the waterslide. His face was red from heat, and the fabric under his arms was yellow. He gestured to the people waiting to ride the lift.

"You see this?"

I nodded.

His hand dismissed the line. "You'll wish for this in July," he said. Then he tugged his baseball cap down, put his hands in his pockets, and trudged toward the lodge.

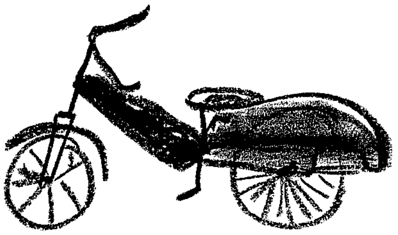
But when the Fourth came it was so humid that the air seemed tinged by the colors of people's clothes. Dewdrops formed on the slide, and every half hour two of us had to ride down pushing towels in front of our sleds with our feet to dry it off. We never closed unless we felt drops or saw lightning—so we were open, but no one came. That night the fireworks above the lake were blurry, and mosquitoes made a faint sound, like the echo of a tuning fork.

It wasn't just us. The economy was strong, but our town was dead. The swarm of tourists that had arrived in past years hadn't materialized. The boardwalk at Bear Beach was quiet. The lake was a vast blue. Lone motorboats buzzed by empty beaches. Our local news reported that the people who'd come to our town in the past—mostly from Massachusetts—weren't coming now because they had more money and could go to Europe.

"I could have told him," my father said. "The alpine slide is just not a great idea. I'm not sure why he thought he could do what no one else could."

Jacques announced a tightening of the belt. He spoke about the difference between the behavior he'd seen and the behavior he wanted to see. He said that he thought we could work a little harder. He said this with perfect equanimity, and soon afterward Amy Goldman and Dave Z. quarrelled. He was going back to college in a month. He was thinking about the future. He wanted to date other people. She gave him an ultimatum. Out of all or nothing, he chose nothing. Now when he spoke to her it was the same way he spoke to everyone else, to tell her to hose out the rest rooms. Their awkwardness would have affected us, but we were busy working hard, which was difficult, since it was quiet and there was little to do.

In mid-July, we each met with Jacques Michaud in his office to see if we'd get a raise. When I went in he was sitting behind his desk, a dinged-up metal one that had been in the basement office for at least ten years. He was smoking a cigar.



"I don't need a raise," I said. I told him that I was worried about the park. I explained it stupidly, in detail. I was so nervous that I was stuttering. He grinned.

"We're doing O.K.," he said. "We're doing all right. Don't worry about the park." Then he said something strange. He said that I was the best worker he had. He said that I had the nicest smile. He said that I made customers feel happy they'd come. "Everyone should treat customers like you treat them," he said. "You think I haven't seen you, but I have. You work hard."

On my way out, he stopped me. "Come by after work and have a drink with us sometime," he said. "Stay and talk."

I wanted to. But from then on the gatherings were cancelled, because the next day, a day when we were actually busy, a woman came down the slide with her face burned off. It was a beautiful morning, and an alabaster light had clapped down over the entire park. Mica gleamed on the sandy paths, and the upturned orange flowers were white at their tips. I was stationed at the bottom of the slide. I'd been telling people to hurry up and get off so that the people behind them could come down. The woman's sled was moving slowly. She was leaning forward, but she had no momentum and the sled just stopped fifty feet up the hill. I yelled at her to keep going, and then two sleds came down fast behind her and bumped her rear and her sled inched forward a bit. She looked up. Her cheeks, nose, and forehead were the red of semiprecious gems. She didn't move—she sat in her sled and stared ahead. A line of kids waited morosely behind her while I climbed up the hill. I helped her up and pulled her sled off the track. The woman walked with me quietly. She had short curly brown hair thinning at the crown, and was stout. She was maybe thirty-five or forty. I asked her what had happened. She said that halfway down the mountain she'd been thrown from her sled. She thought she'd hit something. I nodded, though I couldn't think what she might have hit. Her face was oozing the tiniest pricks of

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blood, as if from a cheese grater, and it made me nervous, so I took her hand. "Don't worry," I said. "It usually disappears." But when we reached the E.M.T. shack the E.M.T. took one look and called an ambulance.

Jacques held a meeting. Most likely, he said, the accident had been caused by a rock in the track. This was an unforeseeable and bizarre circumstance. He was doing everything in his power to help the woman, he said. She was in the best hospital. She was comfortable. In a day, she'd be able to go back to her job. There was no problem. However, to prevent future bizarre events we would now wipe the track down twice in the morning, instead of once, and twice again in the afternoon.

Jacques said all this, but he didn't sound sure of it. He looked as though he hadn't slept.

He cleared his throat. The potential complication, he said, was a lawsuit. But he had visited the woman in the hospital, he had promised to pay for the surgery she'd need once her face healed, and she had said that she wouldn't sue. And he believed her. Did we know why?

Someone suggested that it was his charm.

"Come on," Jacques said. "I'm not that charming. Look at my face. See this face?" He gestured. His face was sweaty and red. "It's an ugly face," he said.

Someone said, "It's not like she was a movie star."

The guy who'd said it was a tall, sarcastic redhead who'd once, as a joke, asked me when I was going to go out with him. I'd treasured the question even though he'd walked off before I could answer. Now Jacques stared at him. The guy stared back. "I don't care," Jacques said. "And I don't want to hear anyone say that again."

"It's no one's fault," someone said. "It was an act of God."

Jacques spat on the floor. "It wasn't an act of God."

"Why not?"

He stared at us incredulously. "Because it was a rock. In the track."

No one said anything else.

He sighed. Then he put on his baseball cap. "This woman works at Kmart," he said. "She lives in a trailer, she doesn't have a washer and dryer, and she's not going to sue because she's from New Hampshire. She's a local." He wiped his forehead. "Locals don't sue," he said. "It's those bastards from Massachusetts that sue."

Two nights later, the woman was on TV. Except for holes for her eyes and mouth, her face was a swath of white cloth. She was sitting on a brown couch with her hands in her lap. The deflated folds of her stomach slumped over her jeans. She told the interviewer that her life would never be the same. The interviewer asked her if she was planning to sue. At first, she didn't answer. She just sniffed a lot. Then she said, "What do you think?" She said some things about how her children would look at her, then she started bawling and they cut the tape.

"How far is two pounds from here?"

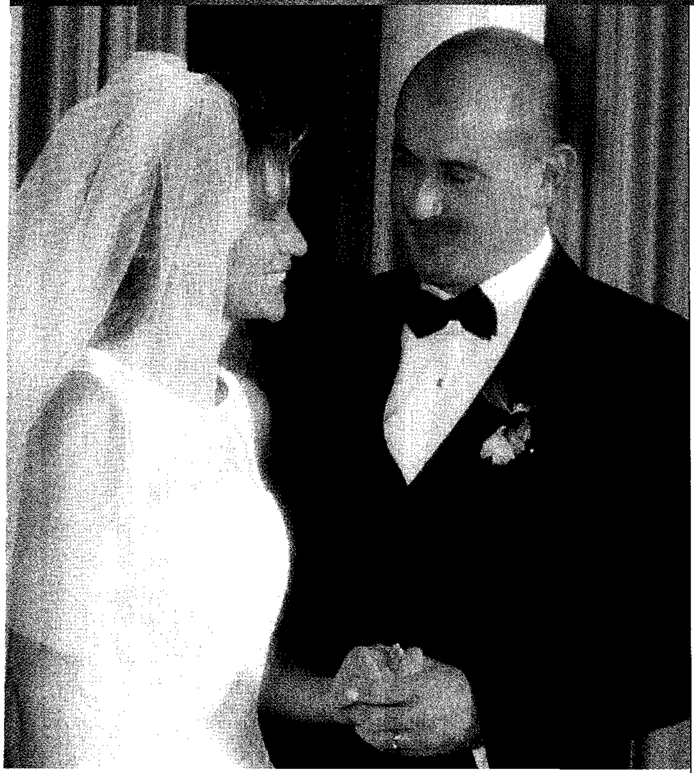
My father shook his head. He said that it was a shame. He said that he'd always been impressed with Jacques's initiative, he'd always liked the park, and it was a shame that a woman would destroy a good business with a lawsuit.

As soon as both of my parents were asleep that night, I climbed out my window. I wanted to warn Jacques Michaud. The woman was suing, and I thought that if he knew about it he could do something, like pay her off. I felt sure that he'd want to do that. I put on sneakers, a turquoise-blue tank top that I thought I looked pretty in, and shorts for maneuverability. I swung from my window onto the sunroof, crawled down its steep shingles, and dropped ten feet onto grass. Then I walked in the heavy dark over the pass. There were a few houses along the way, the houses of old people, but their lights had long since gone off. The moon was nearly full, and the tops of the trees swayed blackly in the tar-blue sky. First warped pavement, then oiled dirt rose up under my feet. I stumbled every few minutes. As the road narrowed and became a path, mosquitoes whined by my ear and pines left pitch on my arms. My heart was beating fast. In my head, I was already there. The whole basement was lit. Music was playing and people were laughing and drinking, looking lovely, all while forming a plan to save the park. When I arrived, they would welcome me and I would come up with the solution, and, while they would have been attracted to me before, now they would love me. By the time I headed down the hill, tripping down the ghostly white slide, I had forgotten that I had no solution. Below, in the clearing, the lodge looked dark. There were only two cars in the lot. Little black things were swooping through the inky sky above the chalets.

When I tried the door, it was locked. I knocked. I could see a faint light

New beginning.

Novartis and Clay drove his cancer into remission in only 60 days.



"When I found out I had a deadly cancer, I had to deal with it alone. Today, I'm feeling great, and I'm starting my life anew." **— Clay Coker**

By the time Clay Coker finally dragged himself into his local hospital, he had already suffered through months of fever, chills and extreme fatigue. But what he discovered made him feel even worse. He was diagnosed with cancer. He was weak, worried – and alone. But those dark days are now in the past. Thanks to Novartis, Clay's cancer has been in complete remission for over four years and he's starting his life anew. Novartis is proud to be the innovative force that's bringing new optimism and hope to patients and their families. No one can promise what the future holds for cancer patients, but today Clay is winning the fight against his particular form of cancer and making the most of his second chance.

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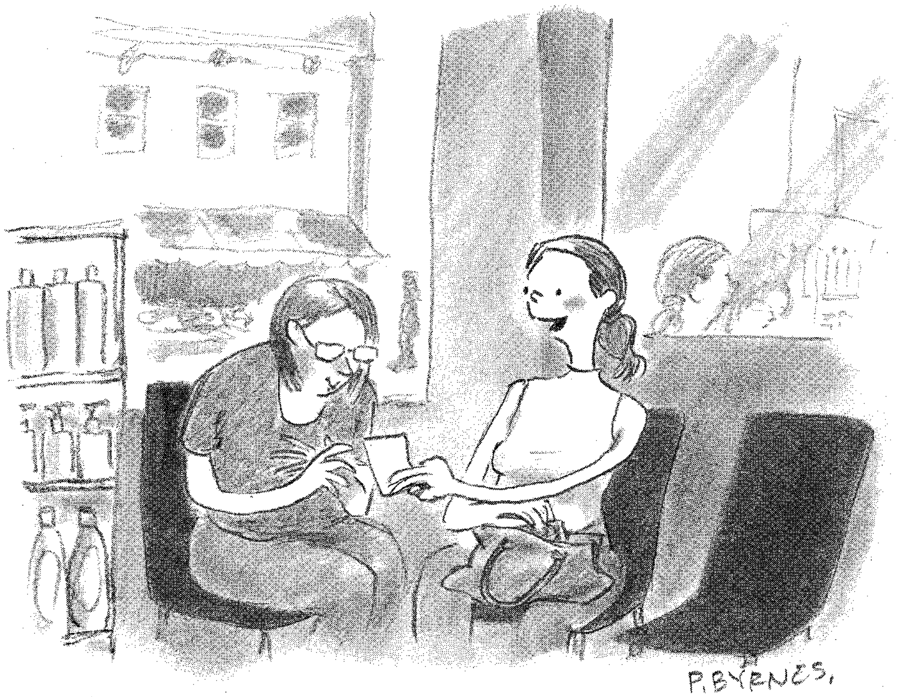


"We adopted her in China, and we're having her raised there, too."

• •

through the keyhole. I knocked again. I called Jacques's name. The black bushes swayed in the breeze by the basement windows. I walked along the perimeter until I reached the one with the light. I squatted down to peer through. In the room, Jacques's room, were two people on a mattress. They were wrapped around each other in a million ways. The man's hair was white, his body dark and thick. The woman's mouth opened in an expression of sorrow, her eyes narrowed, her hands grasped his hair, and she kissed him. It was Amy Goldman. Her blond hair was a gold light that filled the foot of space between her head and the pillow. I felt as if an army were marching through my heart, singing a terrible and joyous song. Jacques placed his hand behind her head and whispered something into her ear. I walked home.

When I reported to work the next morning, no one was there.

My parents made gestures at pity, and my older sister offered to get me a job at the motel where she worked as a chambermaid.

The next day, Jacques was on the front page of the local newspaper. Jacques Michaud, park operator, had skipped town, the article said, owing thousands in electric bills and evading the pending lawsuit of one Charlotte Blanc. In fact, he was not Jacques Michaud. He was Mike Vost, from Chicago, where he was wanted for tax fraud and for operating a bar without a license. As a side note, he had been running the park without insurance. The last person to have seen him was Harry, who owned Harry's Garage in town, and who'd bought his Mark VII Jaguar for four thousand dollars, at two thousand under book. The park was closed until further notice.

For two days, I moped around the house. I refused to take the motel job. On the third day, my mother said she wanted me outside, so I put on sneakers and walked over the pass. I walked down the slide. I could see the black figure eights from when they'd greased it last. The Cannonball was dry, the huts of the craft village closed, and the lot, when I reached it, was empty. I tried the door of the lodge. It was open. Inside, nothing had changed. The slope signs were still on the walls. The kitchen hummed. In the freezer, rows of beef patties were crusted with ice. In the fridge, the vats of Jell-O were growing hard. I walked out and around the back. A car was parked there, with its trunk open. I was peering into the trunk when Jacques came out of the lodge. He was grinning. In the trunk, I could see a suitcase and a lot of loose, junky-looking clothes. He hugged me. He squeezed me tight. I didn't want him to let go. He let go. He pushed me away and crossed his arms over his chest.

"I'm not really here," he said.

I nodded.

"I had a few things to pick up."

I nodded.

He cleared his throat. "Look," he said. He stared intently at me. "I offered that woman five thousand dollars. It would have paid for her operation. I offered."

I evaluated this. I said, "Are you in love with Amy Goldman?"

He gestured to the car. "This is my new car," he said. "Like it?" It was tiny, a red hatchback, rusted all over. "It's kind of small," he said, "but I fit in it."

"It's all right," I said.

"Come here," he said. I stayed where I was. "The whole world is in love with Amy Goldman," he said. Then he said that he wasn't in love with her, but that he liked her a lot and was sure she'd do well in college. I asked him how his wife had died. I felt suddenly very bold and skilled at conversation. He looked surprised, then sad. I thought he was going to tell me to fuck off. But instead he slumped. After a minute, he said that he'd screwed up the marriage and that she lived in Jacksonville, Florida, and was married to a tax attorney. Then he shrugged. "Come here," he said. "Give me another hug."

I did. I thought he might take me with him. I was ready to get into the car.

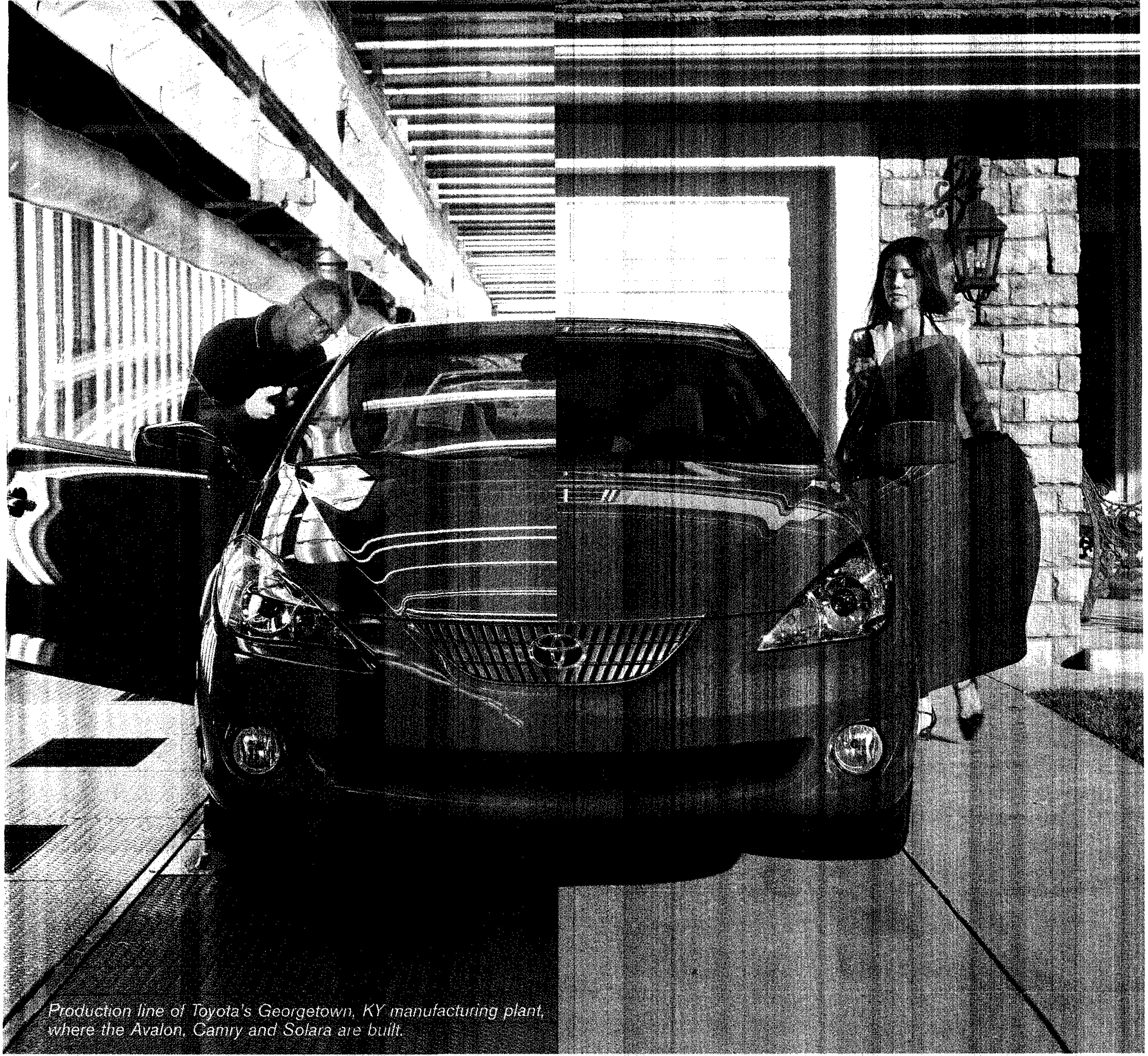
But he held me at arm's length.

"You're too quiet," he said. "The world won't come to you. You can wait as long as you want. It won't come to you. You can wait as long as you want. And then it will be gone." ♦

From the Times.

Moving to Fifth Avenue, she went to the Dalton School, became friends with Oona O'Neill, the daughter of the Eugene O'Neill who later married Charlie Chaplin, and started meeting other people in the theater.

Oh, you mean that Eugene O'Neill.



Production line of Toyota's Georgetown, KY manufacturing plant, where the Avalon, Camry and Solara are built.

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ANNALS OF THE PRESIDENCY

REMEMBER THE ALAMO

How George W. Bush reinvented himself.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

When something important doesn't turn out the way you expected, you go back to the beginning and try to see if there were clues you missed. In the summer of 1999, I drove up to Cooperstown, New York, for my first view of George W. Bush in action as a politician. I thought of it as a trip in the spirit of the opening scene of "All the King's Men," where Jack Burden goes to see Willie Stark in a small-town appearance so that he can find out what the fuss is about. Bush was going to Cooperstown for the induction of Nolan Ryan—Texan, former Texas Ranger, all-time strikeout leader—into the Baseball Hall of Fame. He was already in the thick of running for President, so he had other business to attend to as well; there was a fund-raiser for him in Cooperstown, and he had a long private discussion with Governor George Pataki that people thought might be Pataki's Vice-Presidential audition. But he was plainly going out of his way to make time for Ryan.

Besides the induction ceremony, there was an event in an auditorium for Bush, Ryan, and the press. Bush ambled onto the stage without a lot of ceremony. He was wearing a light-colored sports jacket and slacks, and he made a crack about how Ryan was lucky enough to be able to come out in shorts and sandals. With evident relief, Bush declared that he wasn't there to talk about politics—just sports. The main impression he made was of a man who liked baseball a great deal and admired Nolan Ryan extravagantly. Ryan exemplifies a certain type of Texas maleness, a type that Bush seems to hold almost in awe, perhaps because, contrary to perceptions in Blue America, Europe, and places of that sort, in the Texas context Bush isn't as brawnily masculine as it gets. (Bush is a guy who hunts doves and quail but not deer.) Ryan is tall, laconic, devoted to church and family, rural by upbringing and current residence and urban only by the temporary necessity of playing major-league ball. And tough as hell.

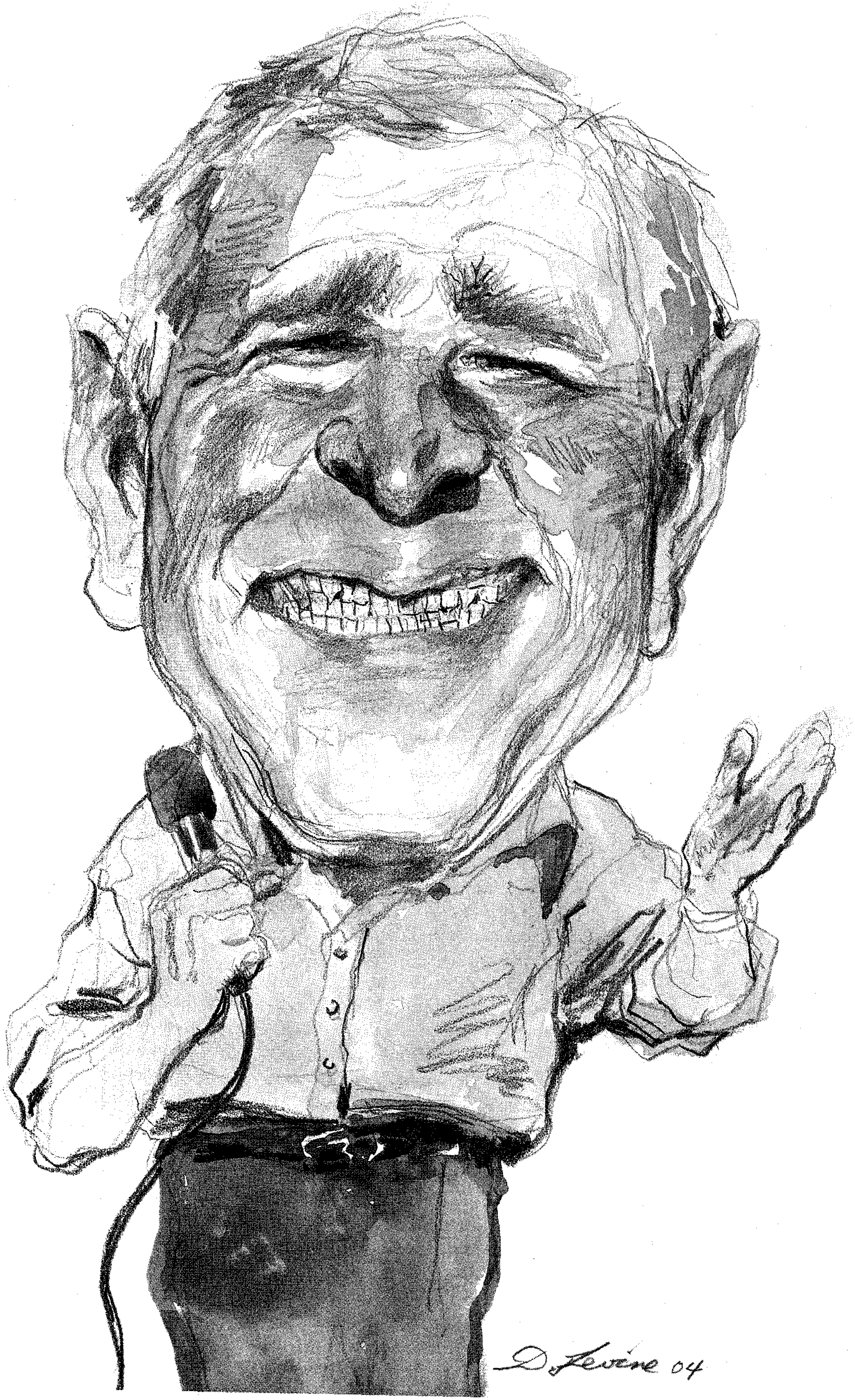
In answer to a question from the audience, Bush alluded, with a low chuckle, to what I'd heard from friends in Texas was his favorite Nolan Ryan moment—on August 4, 1993. Ryan, on the mound at Arlington Stadium, with Bush not far away, in the owner's box, struck Robin Ventura, of the Chicago White Sox, with a pitch. Ventura lost his temper and charged the mound. Ryan, who was then forty-six years old, twenty years Ventura's senior, caught Ventura in a headlock and delivered six blows to his head and face, from a distance of about six inches, really whaling the shit out of him. The scene quickly became a canonical bit of sports video. It's a wonderful example of super-aggressive behavior presenting itself as a form of self-defense when, strictly speaking, it isn't—Ryan had started things by hitting Ventura, after all. But Ryan got to be doubly the hero, slower to anger but also unquestionably physically dominant. Bush, obviously, loved it. "It was a fantastic experience for the Texas Rangers fans," he said.

A couple of months later, Bush made another sports-flavored trip to the Northeast. On a weekend when he had been invited to appear at the California Republican Party convention, in Orange County, Bush, to the mystification of the political press, flew to Boston. There he was photographed, with his parents and his brother Jeb, watching the Ryder Cup golf championship at The Country Club in Brookline—the sort of venue where he usually took pains not to be seen publicly. There was, inevitably, another fund-raiser to attend in nearby Wayland but his real reason for being there was something else: the captain of the American Ryder Cup team, Ben Crenshaw, of Austin, Texas, was another athlete hero-friend of Bush's, and he had asked Bush to come to Brookline to give the U.S. Ryder Cup team a pep talk if necessary. And, sure enough, the European team opened up what seemed to be an insurmountable lead. On the eve of the last day of the match, Bush came into the room where the team was gathered and, by prearrangement with Crenshaw, recited the text of William Barret Travis's letter from the Alamo.

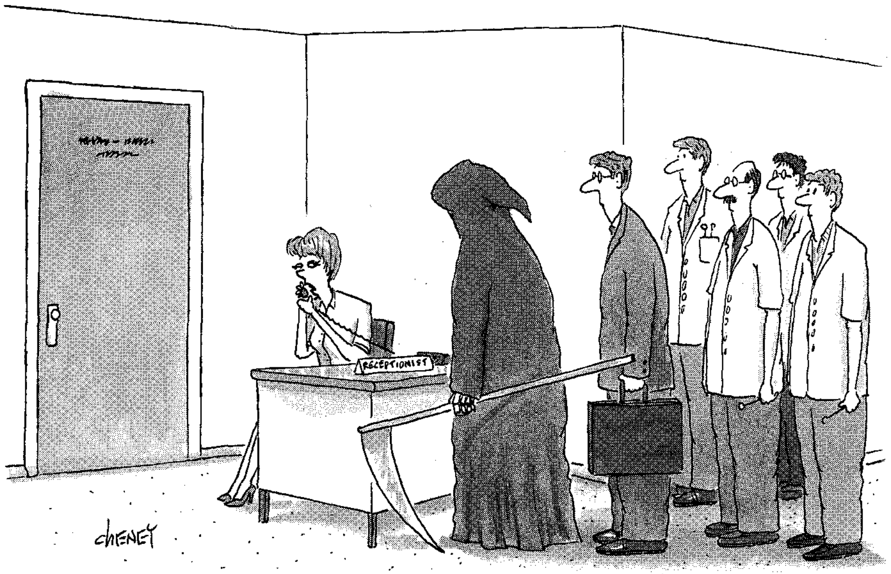
Travis was the commander of the small, valiant Texas force that held off, but was ultimately wiped out by, the Mexican Army at the Battle of the Alamo, in 1836, when Texas was fighting to become an independent republic. What the Declaration of Independence or the Gettysburg Address is nationally, Travis's letter, an unanswered call for reinforcements, is to Texans. Bush probably encountered it in a Texas-history class at Sam Houston Elementary School in Midland. "I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna," Travis wrote (and Bush repeated to the Ryder Cup team). "I have sustained a continual Bombardment and cannonade for twenty-four hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat." Travis ends with this unforgettable, triple-underlined kicker: "VICTORY OR DEATH."

Six weeks after the Alamo fell, Texas won its independence at the Battle of San Jacinto, where the Texas soldiers, shouting, "Remember the Alamo!," killed several hundred Mexicans, while losing only nine of their own. As governor of Texas, Bush installed a portrait

DAVID LEVINE


D. Levine 04

In Texas, the prevailing mood in the political community is one of head-shaking wonderment over Bush's transformation.



"It's death, taxes, and four out of five dentists—are you in?"

of Sam Houston, commander of the Texas forces at San Jacinto and then President of the Republic of Texas, clad in the costume of the Roman consul Gaius Marius, in his office in the state capitol. At Cooperstown, when Bush was asked about Nolan Ryan's pummelling of Robin Ventura, the first words out of his mouth were "Remember the Alamo!" In Boston, the day after hearing from Bush, the American team staged a remarkable comeback and won the Ryder Cup.

Another early Bush event—this one not only indicative but consequential—was a dinner in Chicago, on July 18, 2000, not long before the Republican National Convention, attended by Bush; John C. Danforth, who had retired as a senator from Missouri; his wife, Sally; and Dick Cheney, who left after performing introductions. Danforth had emerged from the Vice-Presidential search process, run by Cheney, as a leading choice, and this was an unannounced courtship dinner. The appeal of the choice is instantly clear. Danforth is distinguished, patrician, and thoughtful; he is an ordained Episcopalian minister; as a central figure in the Washington establishment, he had officiated at Katharine Graham's funeral; and he was a politician who could probably bring into the Republican column an important swing state, and who had a history of winning over Democratic voters. He had been one of the runners-up to Dan Quayle when George H. W. Bush was picking his Vice-Presidential nominee in 1988. Although he had only one conservative credential, it was of particular importance to the Bush family: in the Senate, he had successfully managed the controversial Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas by the first President Bush.

But something didn't click at the dinner. A few days later, Bush announced that Cheney would be his Vice-Presidential nominee, and that decision had many ramifications. To begin with, if Danforth had been Vice-President, Donald Rumsfeld, Cheney's closest government associate, probably would not have become Defense Secretary, and John Ashcroft, another Missourian, probably would not have become Attorney General, so the Cabinet would not have had its most powerful, and most conservative, members. It was also a decision that seemed to reveal a number of Bush characteristics: his mistrust of Washington (Cheney, at that point, was living in Dallas), his dislike of being upstaged (Danforth is taller and more imposing than Bush), his political confidence, even overconfidence (Cheney added nothing to the ticket electorally, in an election where Bush turned out not to have enough votes), his attraction to the person who presents himself as being merely a loyal servitor.

Last summer, I interviewed one of Bush's oldest friends, Clay Johnson, in connection with a "Frontline" documentary on the Presidential election, and heard a new version of Cheney's selection, one that reveals even more about Bush. Johnson—a Texan who met Bush at Andover and was his roommate at Yale, and who is currently a deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, having worked for Bush during his entire career as an elective officeholder—said that Bush had begun the Vice-Presidential selection process by offering the nomination to Cheney. "The now Vice-President declined the option, but did agree to head up the search committee," Johnson said. "And then came back some months later and said that in fact he'd changed his mind and he would be willing to run—to be the President's running mate." Johnson said he had a hunch about what had changed: "Lynne Cheney told some mutual friends of ours that she and Dick decided that in fact they did want to join the Bush ticket, because they came to really like George and Laura, and the Vice-President came to realize that the President wanted to come up here to really make a difference. He was not going to try to play it safe. Not try to extend an easy, moderately successful four years into an easy, moderately successful eight years. He was going to try to come up here and make dramatic changes to the issues he thought needed to be addressed. And the Vice-President got very, very energized and excited about doing that. And so now we have Dick Cheney as Vice-President."

In other words, the team that most people thought of as being made up of a moderate, conciliatory, relatively unambitious Presidential candidate and his bland, self-effacing, government technician of a running mate had thrown in together on the basis of a mutual decision to govern in pursuit of radical change. And they have done that.

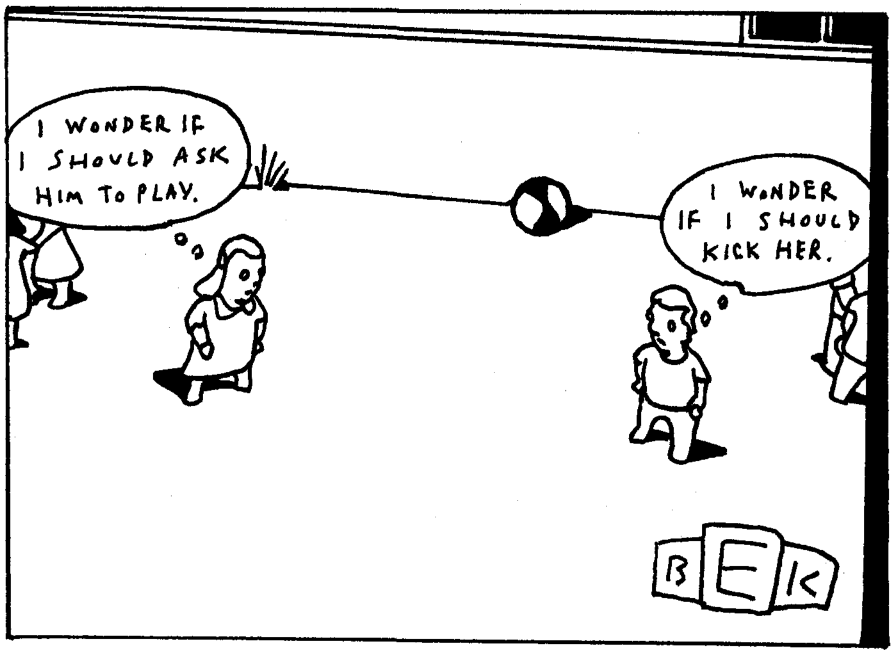
Bush was a wildly popular governor of Texas, and a large part of his national appeal was that he had governed in partnership with Democratic legislators—that, to repeat two of his mantras from four years ago, he was "a uniter, not a divider" and was going to end the "partisan bickering" in Washington. In retrospect, everyone should have been paying more attention to the strikingly changed correlation of political forces in Texas—when Bush left office, there were no Democratic statewide officeholders, and both houses of the state legislature were on their way to having permanent-seeming Republican majorities. Still, the state seemed collectively thrilled at the prospect of Bush's election to the Presidency. Bush himself, overconfident as usual, plainly believed that he was going to win. Congress Avenue, the main downtown boulevard in Austin, was set up on Election Night for an enormous party.

In the ensuing electoral chaos, Bush appeared truly upset at first (his usually flawless physical appearance was marred, for the only time I can remember, by a boil that sprouted on his face), and then went through a phase of manic joking with visitors to the Governor's Mansion and musing about assembling a genuine coalition government, with several Democrats in the Cabinet. Finally, he retreated to his ranch in Crawford while a cadre of family loyalists did what needed to be done in his name.

The pattern—the initial bobble, the retreat, and the super-aggressive comeback carried out by tough-guy surrogates—seems to be a well-established one for Bush. His predecessor as governor, Ann Richards, whom Bush beat in 1994, told "Frontline" 's Martin Smith, "I never saw a tougher campaign than the one when George Bush was the candidate. I wouldn't suggest to you that George Bush does it all himself, because he doesn't. A lot of it is done behind the scenes. So I would say George Bush's organization is the toughest I've ever seen." His response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, exemplifies the pattern perfectly: Bush did not perform outstandingly on September 11th itself, with his delayed reaction to the news, his flying around the country for most of the day, his three shaky television appearances, and his effective ceding of immediate decision-making authority to Cheney. But within ten days he had emphatically declared that the United States was engaged in a global war on terror.

In the earliest days of the Administration, it wasn't clear that Bush would reject a moderate Presidency. In December, 2000, he held a meeting in Austin, with Democrats present, to discuss education reform; he was both charming and knowledgeable, and his visitors came away impressed. Then, not long after his inauguration, Bush held a White House screening of the movie "Thirteen Days," about the Cuban missile crisis, partly as a way of fostering a warm relationship with Senator Edward Kennedy, of Massachusetts, whose brothers were lionized in the movie, and who is the most important Democratic senator when it comes to education issues. Several Kennedys, including the Senator, attended the screening, and it looked as if a happy across-the-aisle partnership had begun. Both Kennedy and George Miller, of California, who was the crucial Democratic member of the House of Representatives on the subject of education, and who had also been at the Austin meeting in December, decided to support Bush's big education initiative, No Child Left Behind, which in the spring passed both houses of Congress with overwhelming majorities. (Miller is as unapologetically liberal as Kennedy, and also as gregarious, and therefore was susceptible to the Bush laying on of hands.) It's a sign of how important a victory on the final bill was for the Administration that on the morning of September 11th Bush was in Florida at an event meant to promote the education bill, and to help nudge the state more firmly into his column in 2004. At the same time, Laura Bush was with Ted Kennedy at the Capitol, where she was to testify before the Senate education committee, also to promote the bill.

In Texas today, the prevailing mood in the political community, and especially among the old Democratic allies of Governor Bush, is one of head-shaking wonderment over where the Bush they knew went. Brutal state-legislative redistricting after the 2000 census left several of Governor Bush's Democratic allies in existential peril. And the state legislature has spent much of its energy since Bush left for Washington trying to fix what now seem intractable problems in the state education system that somehow didn't seem so when Bush was running for President. In Washington, Kennedy and Miller are feeling profoundly wronged, and, since the passage of No Child Left Behind, Bush has not tried to build comparable bipartisan support for any domestic initiative. He went from being a landslide-generating politician in Texas to being a toss-up-generating politician nationally, and from being a seeker of the middle ground with Dem-


I WONDER IF I SHOULD ASK HIM TO PLAY.
I WONDER IF I SHOULD KICK HER.
BEK

ocrats in Texas to being a rightward pusher of the political boundaries in Washington.

By supporting Bush, Kennedy and Miller were doing him a big favor, and taking a risk, because they were going against the natural inclinations of one of the most important interest groups in the Democratic Party, the teachers' unions; for Kennedy and Miller, supporting No Child Left Behind was what supporting a new tax would be for Bush. They went along because they believed that the bill, by setting tougher national standards for public schools, would help children; and, more to the point, they came away from their talks with Bush believing that he was going to pour new federal funding into the schools. They could tell the unions that they had got a lot more money for education in exchange for the standards and the extensive new testing regime that went with them.

Once the bill passed, there were no more chummy phone calls from Bush or invitations to the White House for Kennedy and Miller, and then, when the next federal budget came out, in January, the amount allotted to No Child Left Behind was ninety million dollars less than Kennedy and Miller felt they had been promised. Subsequent budgets brought the same pattern: no contact with the White House, and funding far below what Bush had indicated he would commit. The Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, has referred to the biggest teachers' union as a "terrorist organization." Today, the public-school world is up in arms and Kennedy and Miller have to take heavy, constant fire from their old allies.

I spoke with Miller in Boston during the Democratic National Convention, and he was much angrier than elected politicians usually allow themselves to be on the record. "You fly with your eyes wide open here," he said. "I knew exactly what I was doing. When a person breaks their word—that's it. You're not gonna buy a horse from that guy again. He said it was a thoroughbred." He went on, "They don't consult with the nations of the world, and they don't consult with Congress, especially the Democrats in Congress. They can do it all themselves. They don't want to take anybody's advice on anything. It's the same isolation that got them into trouble in Iraq. They find the basic tenets of democracy—very inconvenient."

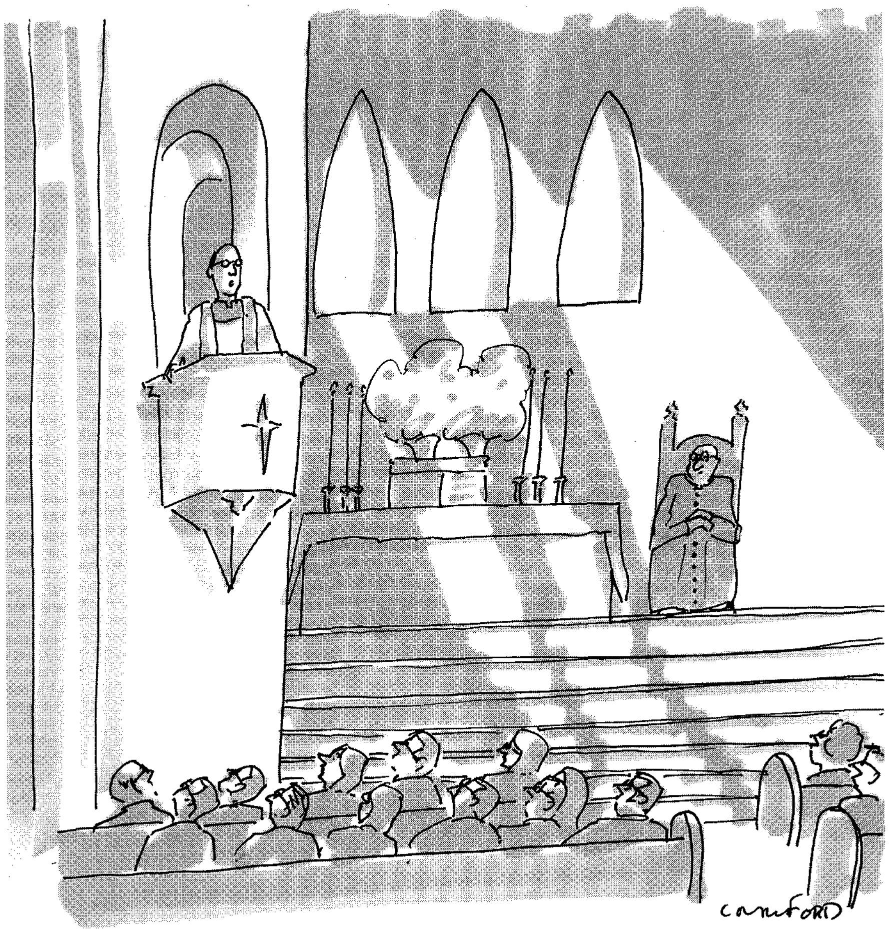
Part of the problem for Miller and Kennedy is the difficulty of communicating their version of what happened, because it entails a broken promise—a promise that was spoken and therefore unenforceable—to increase federal education spending by an even greater amount than it was increasing already. So the Administration can express innocent mystification, in a way that's hard to refute, over what the Democrats are so upset about. When I interviewed Karen Hughes, Bush's communications adviser—a woman compared with whom everyone else, even members of the Bush family, is disloyal and off-message—she told the education story as another example of the betrayal of the President by perfidious Washington Democrats.

"The only thing I can say is that you can reach out, but somebody else has to take your hand," Hughes said, with an air of being terribly disappointed, though not quite disappointed enough for her over-all amiability to be reduced. "And I came to Washington and watched him reach out. And, unfortunately, I don't think the hand was always returned. For example, he reached out to Senator Ted Kennedy, and worked with Senator Kennedy closely on education reforms. And they were able to pass the law. Now Senator Kennedy criticizes those reforms, saying there's not enough funding. Well, the dollars have increased by forty-nine per cent under the term of President George Bush. That's a big increase even for a liberal from Massachusetts!" She laughed merrily.

The one Democrat in Bush's Cabinet, Norman Mineta, the Secretary of Transportation, is rarely visible to the

CAN'T MAKE YOUR MAINTENANCE FEE THIS MONTH?
WHY NOT THROW A...
MAINTENANCE FEE PARTY?
Honey? I was just reading about beatniks and how they used to help each other out when they couldn't make the rent!
THE GOOD OLD DAYS
Tell!
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS:
① Buy some booze and chips... ② Invite your friends...
③ Ask them all to contribute some "bread"!
Are you having a NERVOUS BREAKDOWN?
I don't drink and I don't eat chips.
I have to get up early for work tomorrow. Otherwise... sorry... jeez...
I have a Pilates class then.
This doesn't look good.

public. Of the more moderate Republican members of the Cabinet, Christine Todd Whitman, at the Environmental Protection Agency, and Paul O'Neill, at the Treasury, have left, and Colin Powell, at the State Department, is ever more obviously an outsider. Appointments to federal commissions that are statutorily required to go to Democrats have gone unfilled. On September 20, 2001, when Bush made his war-on-terror speech to a joint session of Congress, he gave a big bear hug to Tom Daschle, of South Dakota, the leader of the Senate Democrats, on his way out of the House chamber—a gesture that, made by a master politician, with the whole world watching, was surely not accidental. Daschle supported the emergency spending measures that Bush proposed after the September 11th attacks, and, earlier, he did Bush a favor by joining other senators in not taking up the Congressional Black Caucus's resolution demanding a recount of the 2000 Presidential-election results in Florida. Since then, Bush Administration officials have visited South Dakota a number of times to campaign for Daschle's defeat. His program for ending the partisan bickering in Washington appears to consist of trying to insure that there are as few people as possible in elected office who might be inclined to bicker with him, and ignoring those who remain.



"Stop me if you've heard this one before."

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Bush was born on July 6, 1946, in New Haven, Connecticut, into about as sociologically comfortable a berth as one can imagine. The United States was the most powerful nation in the world, and his own extended family was in a wonderfully favorable position within it. His father was a war-hero student at Yale, which *his* father, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and several uncles and cousins had attended before him; when George H. W. Bush was tapped for Skull and Bones, a few months after George W. Bush was born, he was the fifth member of his family to receive that honor. The family seat was in Greenwich, Connecticut, one of the wealthiest towns in the country; George W.'s mother, Barbara, had grown up just a short distance away, in Rye, New York, a town almost as prosperous, and in a family almost as prominent. George W. Bush's grandfather Prescott Bush was a managing partner of Brown Brothers Harriman, the Wall Street investment house, whose headquarters were situated in a marble building in downtown Manhattan, and was also a director of at least six corporations, including CBS and Prudential Insurance. Prescott Bush had got his job through George Herbert Walker, his father-in-law and the namesake of both Presidents Bush. Walker retired from the firm to his estates to enjoy a life of investing and sportsmanship.

The Bush family had been helped in the railroad business in Columbus, Ohio, by a member of the Rockefeller family, and the connection persisted over the generations. There was also a deep connection to another of America's principal plutocratic families, the Harrimans. When George W. Bush was six, his grandfather, who was a leader in the campaign to persuade Dwight Eisenhower to run for President, was elected to the United States Senate from Connecticut. There was almost no place that mattered in business or politics, in the United States or Europe, that was out of the Bush family's range.

An important part of what politicians—first-rank politicians, anyway—do is make fully realized dramatic characters out of themselves, who exist in an intimate relationship with the voting public. The character has to bear some relation to the real person, of course, but it is still a genuine act of creation. Bush has done this impressively, making himself, despite his background, the antithesis, and enemy, of "élitists": his conversion from high-church Episcopalian to fundamentalist could serve as the shorthand for this long-running process. James Robison, the Dallas television evangelist, told Martin Smith that in Bush's view it was God's will that he leave the humble life of a small-town Texan to run for President. As Robison recalled, Bush said, "I want to be remembered the rest of my life, when I walk into Wal-Mart to buy bass lures, as 'This used to be our governor. His dad was President.' That's it." Then, by way of explaining the upgrading of his ambitions, Bush said to Robison, "I believe I'm supposed to" seek the White House. Implausible as it may seem, Bush appears sincerely to think that the character he was describing to Robison is who he really is.

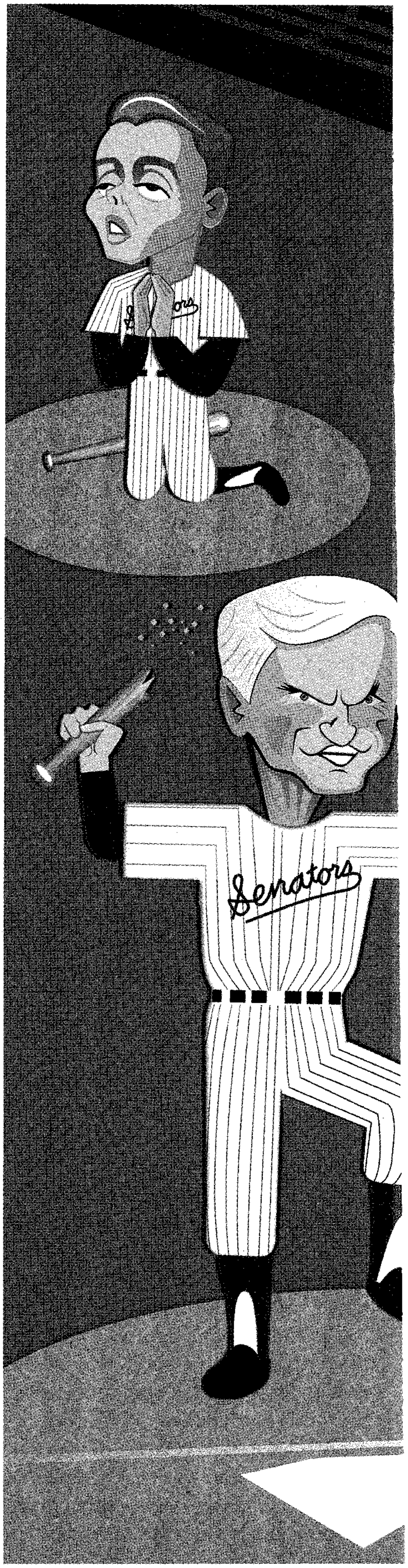
"The disdain that George W. Bush and his brother Jeb have for America's élite institutions is genuine and deeply felt," Peter Schweizer and Rochelle Schweizer write in their fascinating family-insider book, "The Bushes: Portrait of a Dynasty." Even the imperturbable Laura Bush, when I interviewed her, displayed a flash of annoyance at a question that she obviously read as a cultural put-down from a secular East Coast snob. I asked her whether people who are serious about their religious faith could disagree about the morality of abortion. With a tight smile, she replied, "I don't agree with your premise that people of faith have to be serious. Or that people of faith aren't tolerant. You're just wrong. There are people all over the world who have very, very strong faith that are tolerant. And, in fact, people with a really strong faith, I think, are more tolerant."

This kind of bristling plainly isn't being faked, but Bush's anti-élitism can also be seen as a manifestation of his very strong power drive. As the Schweizers observe, the world Bush was born into was the epicenter of the Republican Party then, and it isn't now. Al Gore carried Connecticut in 2000, and John Kerry will likely carry it in 2004; Westchester County, New York, where Barbara Bush grew up, is now the political seat of the Clintons, and it votes Democratic, too. In becoming a martially conservative, tax-cutting, fundamentalist-Christian businessman from the Southwest, Bush has moved in the same direction as his party has during his lifetime (and he will move it further while he is at its helm). If he had been élite in the manner of his grandfather, rather than élite in the way he is now, he would not have had much of a political career.

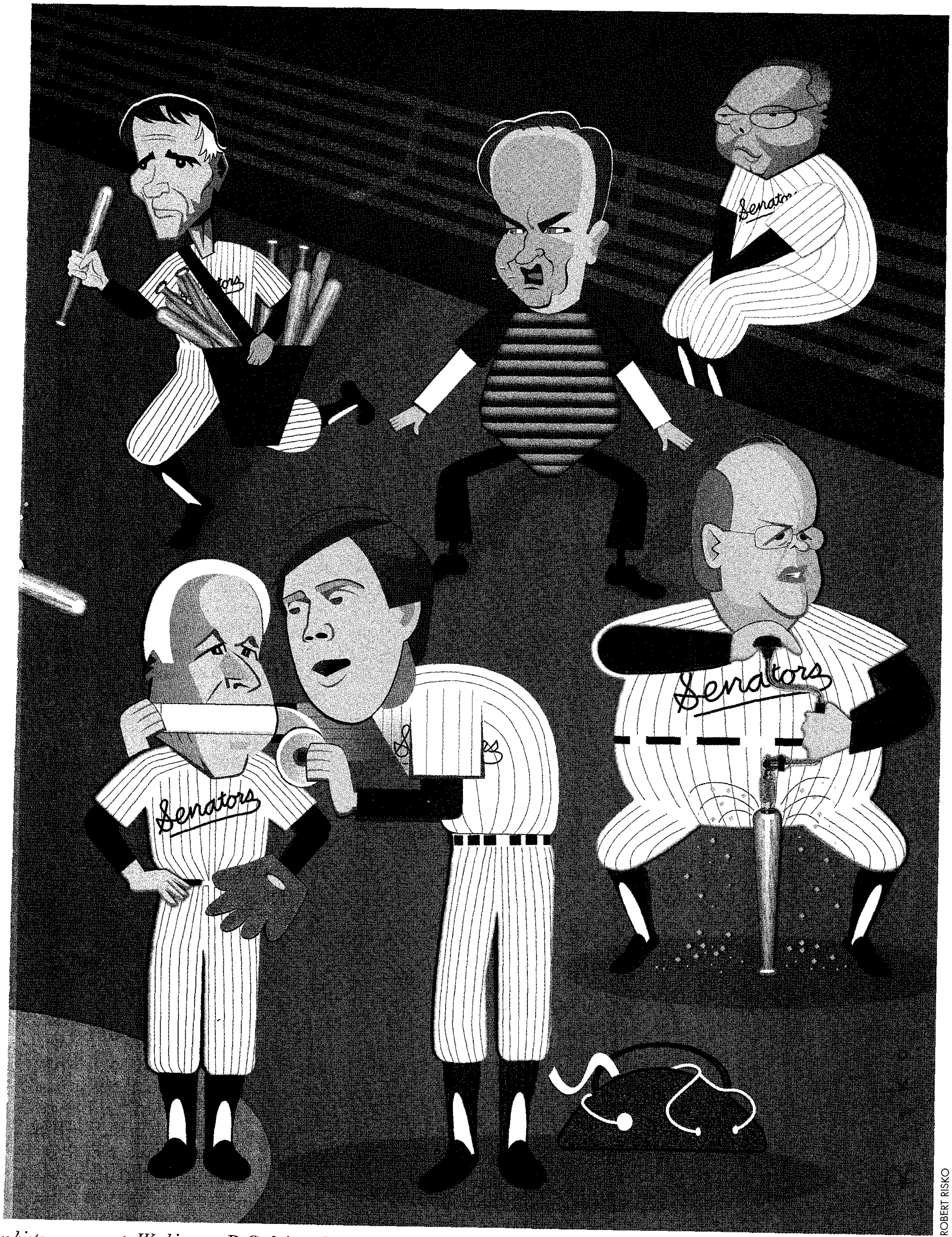
Bush seems to have begun disliking élitists when he was a student at Yale. Yale presented to him a tableau that was different from the one his father encountered: the students and faculty were starting to become markedly more intellectual and more liberal. It's also the case that George H. W. Bush was the exemplar of everything the institution cherished at the time he was there, and that George W. Bush was not. But Bush has not, to say the least, abandoned the idea of himself as a member, not to say the undisputed leader, of the authority-holding group in America. Occasionally, a sign escapes from Bush's world to indicate that it isn't quite as down-home as it appears. Clay Johnson offered this comment, out of an A. R. Gurney play, about John Kerry as a young man: "For what it's worth, I know he wasn't popular. People just didn't like him. Very self-serving, very vain. Wouldn't pass the puck. Catch my drift? He was booed at his fortieth St. Paul's reunion." The master life strategy for Bush has been to leave the game he can't win and create a new one that he dominates.

Accounts that seep out of this very un-leaky White House present it as an almost anti-egalitarian environment. Bush likes being President. "This is fun!" he tells people sometimes, with boyish enthusiasm, but he makes an effort to create a feeling of authority around himself. He never appears in the Oval Office dressed informally (and almost never appears on the campaign trail dressed formally). People call Bush "the President," even behind his back. They stand when he enters a room. Bush genially complains, in a way that indicates less than complete displeasure, about the deference people show him in the Oval Office, even people who have come intending to criticize or disagree with him. He is often short-tempered and demanding with his staff, and he both insists on and receives total loyalty. One never expects to see blind quotes in the newspapers from inside the Bush campaign criticizing key staff members or even the candidate himself, such as one regularly sees from inside the Kerry campaign; all the people in the Bush campaign's high command work only for Bush, and not for any fancy fees, either.

In his first spring as President, Bush



BATS RIGHT *Now that the Montreal Ex*
John McCain (in the hands of Doc Bill Fris


Senators
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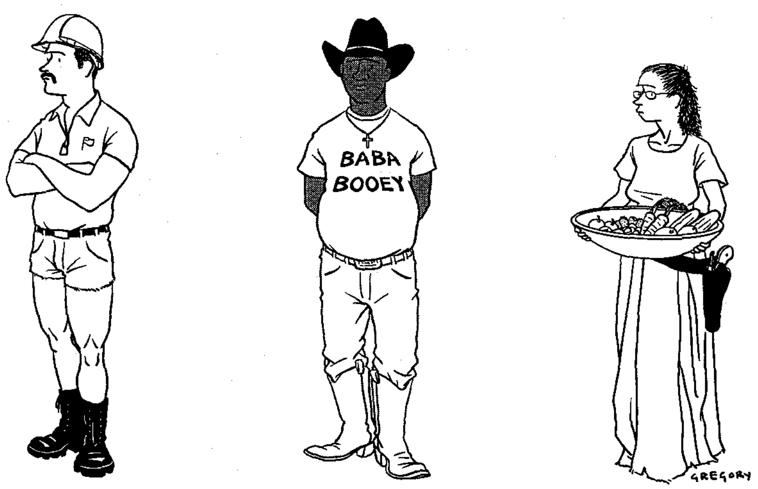
Senators

ROBERT RISKO

e history, a move to Washington, D.C., brings the Senators back to town. The G.O.P.'s squad might include (front) "Sorehead" Zell Miller, uipment manager Karl Rove, and (back) Ralph Reed, Ralph Nader (providing fresh lumber), Bill O'Reilly, and Colin Powell.

STILL UNDECIDED POLITICAL BLOCS



PRO-WAR GAY OIL MEN FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

BLACK CHRISTIAN HOWARD STERN FANS FROM TEXAS

TRUST-FUNDED ORGANIC-FARMING ENRON-STOCK-HOLDING GUN ENTHUSIASTS

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returned to Yale to deliver the commencement address. The trip was billed as a demonstration of the fact that he didn't have a problem with Yale after all, but, typically, he extracted a special fealty from the institution as a condition of his coming. He received an honorary degree (something that Yale didn't award his father until near the end of his term, despite a vigorous lobbying campaign by George W. Bush). In addition, he was honored, as the President, by being allowed to break Yale's longstanding tradition of not having a commencement speaker. And then he gave a speech, to an audience many of whose members were leaving Yale with heavy tuition debts, in which he fondly recalled how unseriously he'd taken his education there. Like a lot of talented politicians, Bush in a crowd can demonstrate a real love, a need, for people, but in other settings he needs, rather, to display a kind of animal superiority. He teases, he touches, he goads, he sends a wink or a cold stare, he bestows nicknames, and, in this campaign, of course, he relentlessly attacks. In general, he insists, with amazing success, on conducting discussions on terms that he alone has set, and on the assumption that reality is what he alone has declared it to be (for example, his recent assertion at the U.N. that "today the Iraqi and Afghan people are on the path to democracy and freedom"). And, in deciding to run first for governor and then for President, he was not troubled by his lack of what would customarily be considered a full measure of experience and preparation. Bush usually tries to establish himself in a position in which he has as much control as possible, and he usually tries to get there not by the normal patient route but by behaving so aggressively that a more direct path opens up.

When someone gravitates so strongly away from the usual back-and-forth of human relations, it can be taken as a sign of confidence—or of insecurity. Despite the fortunate circumstances of his birth, Bush, like everybody else, has sustained his share of wounds. When he was seven years old, his younger sister, Robin, died, and her illness kept his parents away from home a lot. George and Barbara Bush were unusually busy parents anyway; in Ron Suskind's book about Paul O'Neill's brief, unhappy tour in the Bush Administration, there is a story about O'Neill's wife, Nancy, who, seated next to the President at a dinner, tries to make conversation by asking him what was the meal he most liked his mother to prepare when he was growing up. Bush replied, "You got to be kiddin'. My mother never cooked. The woman had frostbite on her fingers. Everything right out of the freezer."

The Schweizers present the senior Bushes as openly having higher expectations for their second son, Jeb, than for their eldest. (They quote George H. W. Bush saying of his son George, "He is good, this boy of ours," and of Jeb, "There is no question in my mind that he will become a major political figure in the country.") They report that, on Election Night in 1994, when Bush won the governor's race in Texas and his brother lost the governor's race in Florida, an aunt overheard him saying on the phone to his father, in the middle of what was supposed to be the big congratulatory phone call, "Why do you feel bad about Jeb? Why don't you feel good about me?" Bush was never a star student—the Schweizers quote another close relative as saying she thinks that he has attention-deficit disorder—and his life up to middle age was not especially affirming. It is a mark of his political skill that, in the 2000 campaign, he successfully turned a thin résumé into a redemption story of an ex-drinker who found God, but, still, he has rarely had a happy experience in situations where he was not completely in control, and had to deal with others as peers and follow preëxisting rules.

A well-worn White House talking point about the Bush-Cheney relationship is that it is especially solid because the Vice-President has had several heart attacks and that keeps him from having Presidential ambitions of his own. But why is this an important point for Bush? Was his father made intensely uncomfortable by the possibility that Dan Quayle might run for President one day, or Bill Clinton by Al Gore's ambitions? The Bush family has a reputation for being unusually preoccupied with loyalty and unusually insistent that staff people know their place. And George W. Bush seems more that way than the other Bushes. A very funny scene early in Richard Ben Cramer's book about the 1988 Presidential campaign, "What It Takes," shows Bush blowing his stack when he sees his father's White House chief of staff, Craig Fuller, sitting in what he regards as a family seat at a baseball game, and, without a second's thought, loudly complaining about Fuller's presumptuousness. That kind of assurance shows a deep sense of comfort with being in the superior position, but not necessarily a deep sense of self-confidence.

I asked Laura Bush to give a thumbnail description of her husband, as if she were a novelist introducing a character. Here's what she said: "Well, my husband has a great sense of humor. He's very funny. He's gregarious. He likes people. He loves to be with people. He remembers people. He's very aware of the story of people. When he meets people, he asks them about themselves. . . . He's very quick. He's quick-witted. He's very quick with the one-liners. He's funny that way. . . . I think maybe he got that characteristic, learned to be sort of the wise guy, to make his parents laugh, when his little sister died when he was seven." She went on, "And he's very competitive. He's competitive as an athlete. And he's competitive as a person, of course, needless to say. You know, you have to be very competitive to run for political office." In conclusion, she said, "He's very strong. And he's tough. And these are times that require people who are very strong."

On the night of September 11th, when Bush walked into the Presidential Emergency Operations Center, underneath the White House, he said, according to Richard Clarke, who was then the National Security Council's counterterrorism expert, "We are going to kick some ass." By September 12th, as several accounts have made clear, talk had begun inside the Administration about the possibility of war with Iraq. Clarke describes Bush's buttonholing him on the twelfth and saying, "See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way." On the afternoon of September 11th, Rumsfeld had sent a note to General Richard Myers about the possibility of striking back at Iraq. That weekend, when the War Cabinet gathered at Camp David, Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, pushed for a military move against Iraq.

The idea of removing Saddam Hussein from power had been circulating in the Bush Administration even before September 11th. Bill Clinton and Al Gore were notionally committed to "regime change" in Iraq; Bush was looking for a way to make the Iraq policy more aggressive. O'Neill describes a meeting of the National Security Council on January 30, 2001, that was devoted, inconclusively, to this subject. Deciding to invade, conquer, and occupy Iraq is by far the most consequential thing that Bush has done as President, and it's frustrating that we don't know, and probably won't for years, exactly when, how, and why he made the decision.

Bob Woodward's two most recent books, "Bush at War" and "Plan of Attack," give the most detailed account of the path to war. Woodward's theory is that when Bush privately instructed Rumsfeld to update existing war plans for Iraq, on November 21, 2001, it set things inexorably in motion. Bush could have stopped the momentum toward war, of course, but he chose not to. When I asked Laura Bush about the timing, she said, "I don't know if I can tell you exactly when he made that decision. But I would say the decision was slow in coming, and with very deliberate—with every angle looked at. And that's the decision you would expect any President to make when he puts American troops in harm's way."

O'Neill has said it was his impression that Bush had made up his mind about Iraq by the time he took office. Cheney told a friend that he expected that Bush had decided by the time he gave his "axis of evil" speech, in January, 2002. Richard Haass, who was, until June, 2003, the head of the policy-planning staff in the State Department and a key adviser to Colin Powell, says that, by the summer of 2002, the Administration had "lit the fuse" on the Iraq issue. Haass is now president of the Council on Foreign Relations, and not long ago I went to see him there to talk about the war. I asked him why, fundamentally, Bush had decided to go to war.

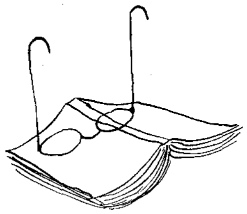
"I will go to my grave not knowing that," Haass said. "I can't answer it. I can't explain the strategic obsession with Iraq—why it rose to the top of people's priority list. I just can't explain why so many people thought this was so important to do. But, if there was a hidden reason, the one I heard most was that we needed to change the geopolitical momentum after 9/11. People wanted to show that we can dish it out as well as take it. We're not a pitiful helpless giant. We can play offense as well as defense. I heard that from some people. Of course, some would say that Afghanistan was enough. There are two what-ifs. One, what if

"It's always 'Get me a Godzilla type,' never 'Get me Godzilla!'"

there had been no 9/11—would it have happened? I think the odds are slightly against it, even though some people were for it. Two, what if we knew there were no weapons of mass destruction? I'd say no. But the urge to do this existed pre-9/11. What 9/11 did was change the atmosphere in which decisions were made. The only serious argument for war was weapons of mass destruction."

The lack of clarity about Bush's decision is important, and it has a lot to do with why things have gone so badly in Iraq after the quick, impressive military victory. The President who screened "Thirteen Days" at the White House obviously did not conduct the kind of exercise depicted in that film, in which a President, at the brink of war, elaborately seeks all possible information, tries to expose himself to every argument, and debates with his top officials the consequences of every possible course of action. In the hundreds of pages of Woodward's books, nothing like this ever happens.

Richard Clarke told Martin Smith, "He doesn't reach out, typically, for a lot of experts. He has a very narrow, regulated, highly regimented set of channels to get advice. One of the first things we were told was 'Don't write a lot of briefing papers. And don't make the briefing papers very long.' Because this President is not a reader. He likes oral briefings, and he likes them from the national-security adviser, the White House chief of staff, and the Vice-President. He's not into big meetings. And he's not into big briefing books." Clarke added, "The contrast with Clinton was that Clinton would hold a meeting with you. And he read your briefing materials. But also, having read your briefing materials, he would have gone out and found other materials somehow. He would have directly called people up. Not people in the government, necessarily. Experts, outside the government. Or he would have found magazine articles, or—or books on the subject. So that, when you were briefing him, frequently you had the feeling that he knew more about the subject than you did. And he wasn't showing off. He had just done his homework." By contrast, Bob Woodward told me that, during an interview he conducted with Bush in December, 2001, he asked the President whether he ever sought advice about the war on terror from distinguished figures outside his Administration, such as Brent Scowcroft, his father's national-security adviser. Woodward told me that Bush said to him, "I have no outside advice. Anybody who says they're an outside adviser of this Administration on this particular matter is not telling the truth. First of all, in the initial phase of this war, I never left the compound. Nor did anybody come in the compound. I was, you talk about one guy in a bubble." Bush said, "The only true advice I receive is from our war council," and he added, "I didn't call around, asking, 'What the heck do you think we ought to do?' " In August, 2002, Scowcroft wrote an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* opposing the idea of war in Iraq. Such a move seemed uncharacteristic for an inside player like him, but he obviously felt that doubts about Iraq, even coming from someone with his bona fides, couldn't get a private hearing in the Bush White House.



Haass reminded me that he had gone to see Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser, in June to express doubts about going to war, and came away with the impression that the decision had already been made. Afterward, he reported to his boss, Colin Powell, what Rice had said. By August, Powell had come around to the view that the war couldn't be headed off. He decided that his best chance was to influence how it was done, not whether. He argued passionately for going to Congress and the United Nations, and he persuaded Bush. Shortly after Scowcroft's article appeared, Cheney made a fiery pro-war speech at a Veterans of Foreign Wars convention. So it was Scowcroft and Cheney, not Powell and Bush, who were conducting the fundamental debate.

The war in the War Cabinet was unusually intense even by Washington's high standards. Bush's advisers like to describe him as an M.B.A. President, or a C.E.O. President—someone who isn't afraid of surrounding himself with

EXIT DON GIOVANNI

Somewhere below his pride, the Don's bad dreams
Fashioned the statue that would take him down.
Deep underground, the tears were there in streams.
The man who had the only game in town,

In Spain, in Europe, when it came to love,
Sensed that there had to be a reckoning.
The boundaries he claimed to soar above
Meant nothing to him except everything.

Why the defiant stance, if not from shame?
And why deny that truth, if not from fear?
The bodice ripper made his famous name
By staying buttoned up. His whole career

Came back to haunt him in a stony glance.
Transfixed, he followed where the statue led.
Below, tips of hot tongues began to dance.
Further below, it was a sea of red.

There was a jetty. Next to it, a raft
Held every name on Leporello's list,

Even from just last week. The statue laughed
And left. The women, modelled out of mist,

Were images, as they had always been
To him, but strong enough to ply the sweeps.
They would not meet his eye, having foreseen
What waited for him on the burning deeps.

A long way out, they paused, and one by one
They disappeared, each hinting with a smile,
But not to him, their work had been well done.
He was alone. To cry was not his style,

But then he reached down through the surface fire
Into the water. Almost with relief
He learned at last the flames of his desire
Had floated on the ocean of his grief.

Had he known sooner, what would that have meant?
Less to regret, and little to admit?
The raft burned: final stage of his descent.
Hell was on Earth. Now he was out of it.

—*Clive James*

strong figures, and who firmly sets a general direction while leaving the details to others. The problem with this description is that people who run effective organizations don't let their underlings squabble endlessly, so that fundamental questions are unresolved for months. They also don't relegate matters of the utmost urgency, such as the initial decision on who was to be in charge of the reconstruction of Iraq, to the level of details to be worked out by others. Before the war, virtually everyone who knew anything about Iraq was warning, loudly, that achieving a conventional military victory would be, relatively speaking, the easy part of the operation. The hard part would be making Iraq function as a coherent democratic nation afterward, because of its history of ethnic division, violence, and resistance to central governmental authority. Bush doesn't seem to have spent much time worrying about that.

Even when Bush was governor of Texas, he liked allowing his top aides to argue heatedly in his presence. Accounts of such scenes are sketchy, but what they evoke is a discussion in which things don't get sorted through and resolved. Bush is the dominant presence—a position that he establishes by asking a few pointed questions, by giving very broad over-all signals, or by simply allowing other people to fight openly for his favor—but he does not either guide or take part in the exchange that would lead to a decision. In the early days of his Presidential campaign, Bush was introduced by his new circle of policy advisers to a Washington institution called a "murder board," in which a politician's aides fire hostile questions at him as a method of preparing for the rigors of public appearances. Bush resisted, and had to be talked into it. He prefers to assemble a group of friendly people from the conservative movement, who are profoundly grateful for being granted time in his presence, and to free-associate about the issues of the day—tuning up the instrument, as it were—while they listen. And, in trying to figure out his position on an issue, Bush, like a lot of other politicians, doesn't so much analyze as look for a hook—a phrase or a way of framing the issue that feels instinctively right to him. In his case, instinct usually takes him to a position where he is in charge and everyone else has to adjust.

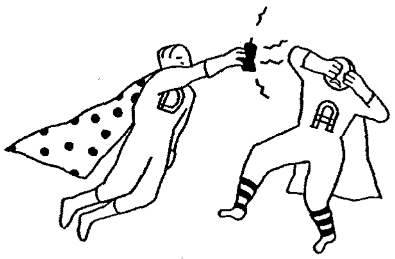
The long period of preparation for the war in Iraq now appears to have been devoted more to justifying a foregone conclusion than to actually preparing—except in the case of the invasion itself. The Administration's hawks relentlessly pushed for higher intelligence estimates of the threat that Saddam Hussein represented and for lower military estimates of what the invasion and the occupation would require. Haass, who was frozen out by the hawks, said, "There were a lot of loaded assumptions about the analysis: The aftermath would be a lesser included case of the war. The Iraqis would see the coalition as liberators and they'd be welcomed. Those who didn't buy in were excluded. People who raised implementation questions were seen as backdoor critics of the war."

When Bush went to the United Nations in the fall of 2002 and obtained a resolution that got weapons inspectors back into Iraq, it was more as a concession to Powell than as a thought-through Administration policy. The hawks, who had always been contemptuous of the U.N., were dismissive of the inspection process. (A little-noticed nugget in Woodward's "Plan of Attack" is that the Administration spied on Hans Blix, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, while he was doing his work.) The Administration was unable or unwilling to get the heads of state of the other Security Council members to agree at the outset on what they would consider an unacceptable result from the inspections. So on the eve of war, when Bush declared the result unacceptable, the nations that were capable of sending large numbers of troops to Iraq didn't agree with him and refused to help, which is one reason that the occupation of Iraq has been so expensive and has stretched the U.S. military past its limits. The Administration consistently pushed every aspect of Iraq policy—intelligence-gathering, diplomacy, military strategy, foreign-policy doctrine, and, of course, the treatment of prisoners—into a new realm of statecraft, characterized by a total and, it has turned out, excessive faith that pure force would produce far better results than anyone had previously realized. Bush's advisers urged him in this direction, but he chose which advisers to hire and to listen to. It was really a natural outgrowth of who he is.

In the current Presidential campaign, Bush has expertly drawn attention away from how high a price the United States has paid for the war in Iraq. It is difficult to find anybody in Washington, in either party, who will seriously defend Bush's management of Iraq. Most of the available armed forces of the United States are pinned down in a place that represents a threat chiefly because American troops are there. That limits American options in places that pose much more genuine threats. The reputation of American intelligence agencies has been badly damaged—would anyone now heed warnings from them? It is increasingly difficult to imagine other major powers joining the United States in an international endeavor, even one that isn't a war. The government's financial resources are depleted. The U.S. military in Iraq has started trying to take back areas of the country now controlled by insurgents, and it may not be safe enough there for the scheduled elections to be held in January. The country still has no meaningful army or police force. It doesn't seem that there will be, any time soon, a way to extract the American forces without risking Iraq's descent into chaos, of a kind that would be both dangerous and humiliating to the United States and would betray Bush's repeated promises to bring the Iraqis a better life.

The Bush campaign has taken the discussion of the war, whose specifics are so unfavorable to him, to the much more propitious level of generalization: Democrats and the international community are incapable of responding to evil and to danger: Don't you feel safer with Bush in the White House? When I talked with Karen Hughes, I asked whether President Bush still feels that Saddam Hussein's regime represented enough of a threat to justify war. She gave an answer that was a version of something Bush often says: "I think he feels that Saddam Hussein was a threat to America, and that the risks in a post-September 11th world—knowing what we know after September 11th, that there are terrorists who hate us, that we had a tyrannical dictator who hated us, who we know had at least the capability of developing weapons of mass destruction, because he had done so in the past and had used them in the past, and knowing that we have terrorists who want to gain access to those weapons—yes, we did the right thing. We have to view those kinds of threats as the very, very serious threats that they are. Because the nightmare scenario that we're going to face, unfortunately, I think, for decades to come, is that these terrorists, who want to sow chaos and want—they want to murder. That's what they want to do. They want to shock us and terrorize us and cause us to retreat. And the nightmare scenario that we have to prevent is that they would somehow access the means to do so on an even wider scale." This version of the war has Bush playing Nolan Ryan to Saddam's Robin Ventura—except in this case Ryan, sensing a gathering danger, rushes the plate to deliver his famous thrashing.

President Bush, Hughes remarked, "believes that you use campaigns to build support for the things you want to do when you're in office." This is true, and the constant barrage of charges (most of them flung by the Bush camp) in this campaign has obscured what Bush has set forth, on a separate track, as his goals for his second term. He is not secretive; quite often, he has laid out ambitious plans months or years before they were launched, in the texts of public speeches of the sort that Washington usually doesn't pay much attention to—so-called "major policy addresses." Bush likes to put down markers that permit him a great deal of latitude. During his first six months in office—before September 11th, that is—he changed things to a degree that one would associate with somebody who had won in a landslide, not in a tie. In Bill Clinton's last year in office, the federal government had a surplus of $236.4 billion, and the surplus was rhetorically dedicated, for all time, to a metaphoric "lockbox" devoted to the two biggest domestic federal programs, Social Security and Medicare. Bush cut taxes to such an extent, even before the war on terror began, that the surplus was likely to evaporate (the government is now running a four-hundred-and-twenty-two-billion-dollar deficit), and the lockbox, supposedly a defining feature of American politics, is a distant memory.



Before September 11th, Bush unilaterally withdrew the United States from the Kyoto accords on global warming, and he had signalled a desire to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the International Criminal Court. He launched a program to develop missile defense, with a view to changing American nuclear strategy fundamentally. He avoided direct dealings with Yasir Arafat, of the Palestinian Authority, which was a departure from the practice of the Clinton Administration, and he committed the United States to defend Taiwan against attack, which represented a tilt against China that the previous six Presidents had chosen not to make. And he was trying to find a way to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

In his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Bush said, "We are staying on the offensive, striking terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. And we are working to advance liberty in the broader Middle East, because freedom will bring a future of hope and the peace we all want. And we will prevail." This statement leaves Bush a lot of room for further maneuvering in the Arab world in a second term. Another act that received insufficient attention was his cutting off of relations, in 2003, with Muhammad Khatami, the elected head of state in Iran—whom the Clinton Administration had treated as a friend—which followed a year of openly wishing for the overthrow of Khatami's government. As Iran moves toward having nuclear weapons—the evidence is much clearer than it was in

“Perhaps I’m asking too much of you in the way of companionship.”

the case of Saddam Hussein—and increasingly exerts its influence in Iraq in a way that is harmful to American interests, it’s hard to imagine that Bush won’t feel he has to act. Pakistan is unstable (President Pervez Musharraf has survived multiple assassination attempts), and it has nuclear weapons. No President could allow Musharraf to fall and let Pakistan’s weapons get into the wrong hands in the aftermath, and Bush would surely respond more forcefully, and less cautiously, than another President confronted with that situation.

Quite often this year, Bush has wondered publicly about the desirability of fundamental changes in the tax system and in Social Security. He doesn’t speak about the deficit as a problem to be solved, and that is probably because he doesn’t regard it as such. Instead, the prevailing view in the White House seems to be that big government deficits might actually be a force for good, because they make it impossible for government to grow. (In this respect, Bush is much more like Ronald Reagan than like his father, who raised taxes to close the deficits that Reagan policies had helped create and, partly as a result, lost his reëlection campaign.) Bush is already trying to make permanent some early tax cuts that were passed with expiration dates, and that would increase the deficit more. He has also speculated during campaign appearances about abolishing the progressive income tax in favor of a flat tax, or replacing the income tax altogether, with a national sales tax or a value-added tax, like the one he proposed unsuccessfully in Texas in 1997. During his first term, he appointed a little-noticed commission on the future of Social Security, which has called for phasing out the existing system of universal government-administered retirement benefits and phasing in personal retirement accounts. (Bush has called for some variant of this idea in every State of the Union address.) Even Republicans in Congress balked, and nothing happened; but now the Administration is planning a campaign to change Social Security along the lines that the commission recommended. The prescription-drug-benefit bill that Congress passed last year has a provision—which, again, didn’t get much notice—to do the same thing in health care, by establishing individual “health savings accounts” as an alternative to the government’s guaranteeing medical coverage.

Bush, unlike his father, is drawn to big, landscape-changing ideas, and—also unlike his father—he thinks like a politician. Much of what he has planned for the second term is meant to serve the goal of making the Republican Party as dominant in national politics as Bush’s foreign policy means to make the United States in world affairs. The Democrats are the party of government; systematically reducing government’s ability to provide services, its employment base, and its role as a provider of the two most essential guarantees, pensions and medical care, cuts off the Democrats’ oxygen supply. In his first term, Bush has won confirmation for two hundred and one of his two hundred and twenty-six appointees to the federal judiciary—all but two of them Republicans—and in a second term he would likely get the opportunity to appoint as many as three Supreme Court justices.

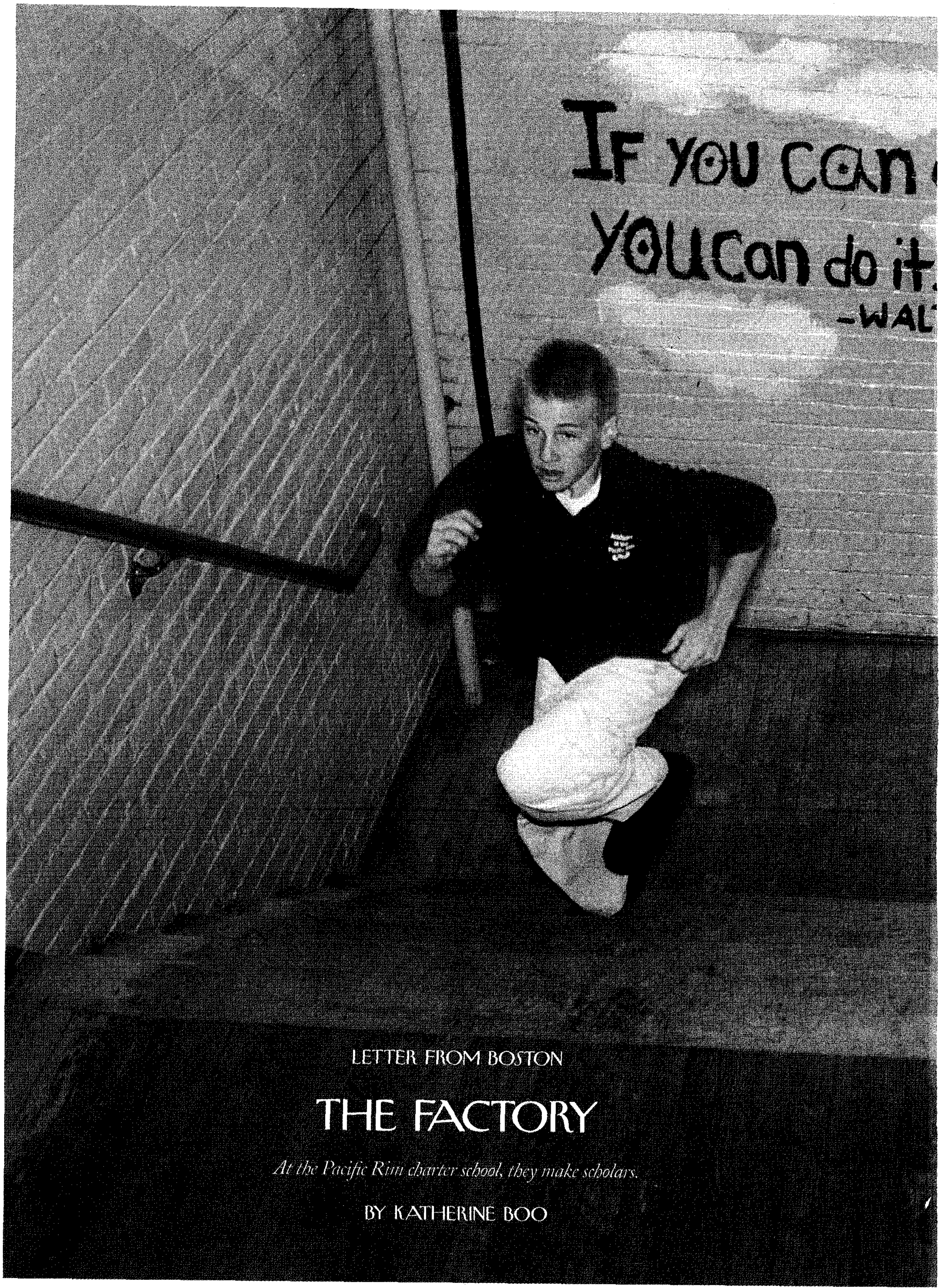
In early 2000, writing about Bush in these pages, I said that he seemed to want to become President very badly, but that he did not seem to want to do a lot once in office. Boy, was I wrong! If the voters give Bush a second term, he would, it seems, govern with the goal of a Franklin Roosevelt-level transformation—in the opposite direction, of course—of the relation of citizen to state and of the United States to the rest of the world. He would pursue ends that are now outside what most people conceive of as the compass points of the debate, by means that are more aggressive than we are accustomed to. And he couldn’t possibly win by a smaller margin than last time, so he couldn’t possibly avoid the conclusion that he had been given a more expansive mandate. ♦

LETTER FROM BOSTON

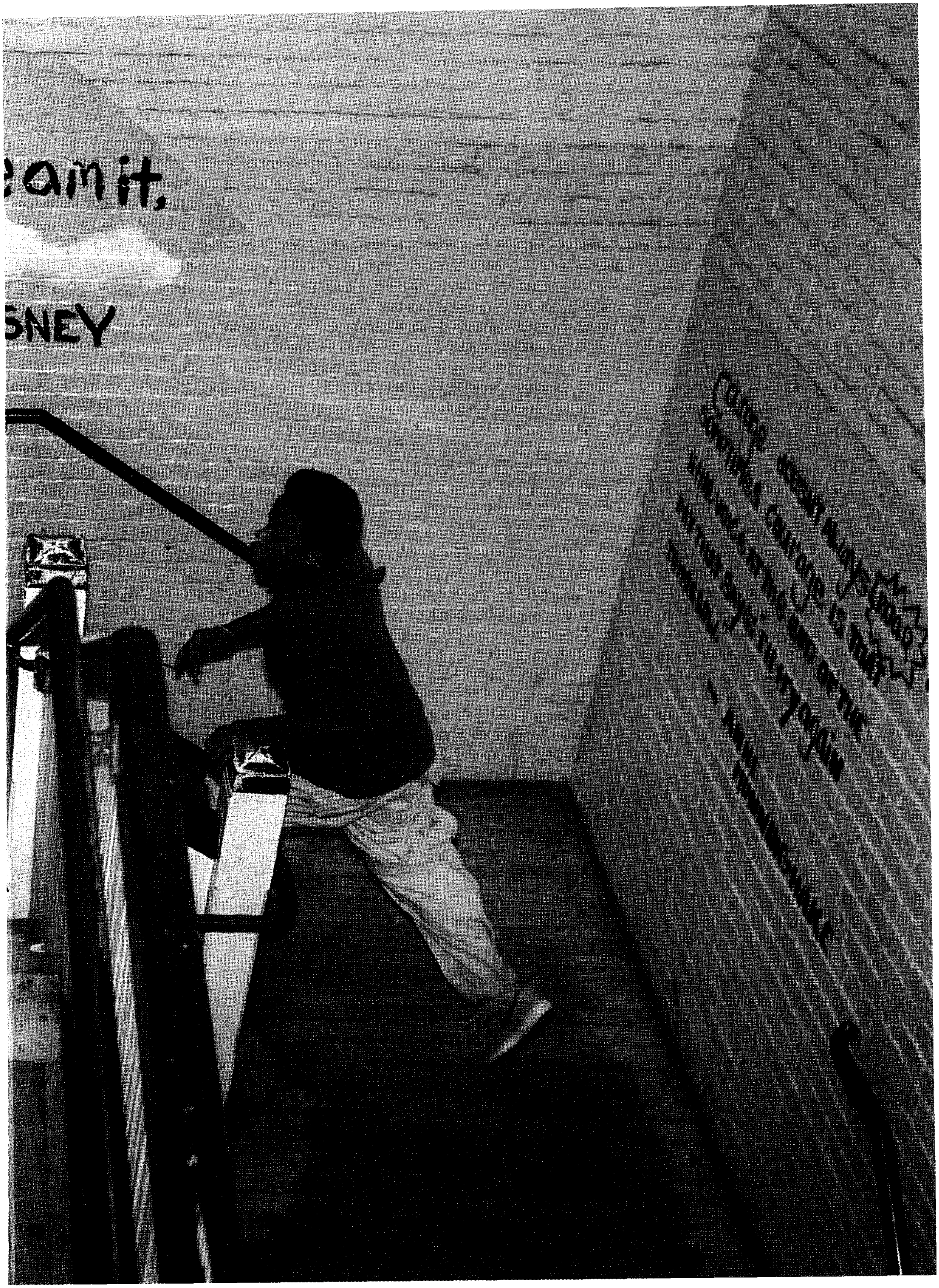
THE FACTORY

At the Pacific Rim charter school, they make scholars.

BY KATHERINE BOO



The school day is eight hours long, and the academic year is eleven months. One student recently translated Snoop Dogg's "Gin and Juic


eam it,
SNEY
ROAR

to Mandarin. The entire class of 2003 now attends a four-year college. Photographs by Reuben Cox.

A year ago in September, strangeness was afoot in Boston. A gorilla roamed the streets of Dorchester, and the Red Sox made the playoffs. Water droplets on the window of an ophthalmology clinic coalesced into the shape of the Madonna and Child, and forty thousand pilgrims came to marvel. A burly seventeen-year-old from Roxbury named Rousseau Mieze, a child of Haitian immigrants, welcomed any climate obliging to miracles. His family was poor, his high-school grades were mediocre, and he wanted to go to college.

Rousseau had felt burdened as a child by his unusual name. He was pleased to discover, not long ago, that he shared it with an eighteenth-century French philosopher who wrote of institutional inequity, lost childhood, and other matters about which Rousseau had some insight. As he began his senior year in high school, however, such knowledge left him less philosophical than glum. He was six feet two and two hundred and fifty pounds; adults sometimes crossed the street when they saw him. And yet some mornings it was an effort just to open the door to his school—two floors of a former Westinghouse factory in a landscape of rotting pallets and obsolescent gears. "Academy of the Pacific Rim," a cardboard sign taped at the entrance said. His mother, Cazilda, who was a cleaning woman, had forced him to enroll, and he knew now that he'd been lucky. Other urban high schools greeted their students with pat-downs and metal-detecting wands. Pacific Rim, a charter school, opened up to a stairwell the color of canaries, on which his classmates had painted exhortations. "We are what we repeatedly do," Aristotle said, apparently; on optimistic days, taking the steps two at a time, Rousseau would say those words, too. On other days, his own words drowned out Aristotle's:

My life yo I'm thankful
On the real I feel I'll tank though
I feel like death is hangin' on my ankle.

Rousseau once wrote lyrics about money and girls, "your standard rapper concerns." But writing, his English teachers insisted, was also a way for a person to listen to himself, and he was working with fresh themes. One was the regulation of desire. With prayer and self-discipline, he had found, he could suppress his yearnings for random female companionship and the FUBU jerseys that other kids wore. "Two-hundred-dollar shoes? Invented necessity," he'd tell his friends. "Really, what's the point?" But he knew that there was a difference between an expensive four-year college education and the one he could get at the community colleges and trade schools of Roxbury. In his journal, Rousseau had scribbled a list of reasons for coveting the pricier variety: "get good job," "support parents," and "experience life outside of the strain of being poor." Long-term strategy was not his forte, however, and now his miscalculation became clear. His S.A.T. scores of eleven hundred were above the national average; he'd been class president repeatedly, and could discourse on Homer when required. But three years of nonchalance toward ordinary schoolwork had given him a cumulative grade-point average of C-minus. "Maybe you can't make a new beginning to your life," teachers sometimes said to kids in his position. "You can, though, make a new ending." The kids, of course, knew the real-world proviso: It's easier to improve your ending if you don't begin so far behind.

"The whole time I served in the U.S. Congress, I dreamed of exactly this: being a wealthy lobbyist sitting here with you."

"You know the stressed-out review period before the exams?" Rousseau said. "It's like this whole senior year is one big review—your final opportunity to show colleges what you can do, to say, 'I am more than my numbers.' But, on some level, you don't know what you can do yourself. Maybe your teachers say you're smart, a leader, have potential, whatever. But you're kind of wondering if the numbers might be right."

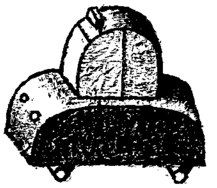
If he was rich and able to write a check for tuition, Rousseau suspected, some college might take a chance on him. If he was a promising point guard, he'd be golden. As much as he loved pickup games at a court up the slope from his apartment, he was exasperated by the cultural assumption that the dreams of tall, black kids involved not B.A.s but the N.B.A. Pacific Rim didn't care for competitive sports, anyway; it asked students to change their prospects by using their minds.

In the seven years since it opened, the Pacific Rim charter public school, which serves sixth to twelfth graders, has hopped around southern Boston, holding classes in a church attic, a former barbershop, and on the second floor of a parochial school called Most Precious Blood. Rising rents have driven Pacific

Rim ever farther from the hub of Boston; it now sits in Hyde Park, the city's southernmost tip. Amtrak trains pass within a few feet of the factory it shares with two Hummer-driving white rappers, construction companies, and a metalworking shop. Train shrieks are something that the faculty have been learning to ignore, just as students have been learning, sometimes the hard way, that the abandoned coils of concertina wire behind the school are best stepped over, not on.

More than three thousand charter schools have sprung up in the United States since 1991, when Minnesota became the first of forty-one states to establish alternative institutions as competition for the nation's troubled public schools. Of those institutions, Pacific Rim is one of the oddest. It was the inspiration of a Chinese-American dentist and father of three named Robert Guen, who believed that Boston's black-and-white politics were leaving Asian kids underserved by public schools. After Guen was appointed to the Boston school board, in the early nineteen-nineties, he and another public-schools activist, Robert Consalvo, began to think not just about different school policies but also about a different sort of school: small, marked by strict discipline, character education, and compulsory Tai Chi and Mandarin Chinese classes. Its school day would be eight hours and its school year eleven months—time in which students who had been overwhelmed by large, sometimes lawless public schools might peacefully prepare for college. Guen and Consalvo applied for a charter, and in 1997, when the school they had envisioned opened, it proved more popular than they had anticipated.

In September of 2003, two of Guen's daughters were enrolled at Pacific Rim. They were among the few Asian kids in the school. Given the grim educational options in neighborhoods like Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, African-American and Haitian-immigrant students had come en masse. And so Pacific Rim became an Asian-Creole-American stew—a place where kids studying Mandarin and Tai Chi were mostly black and poor. Cultural collisions were inevitable, and sometimes delightful: Rousseau's friend Marcus McCroskey had recently translated Snoop Dogg's "Gin and Juice"—an anthem to efficient sex, strong drink, and tribal loyalty—into Mandarin. More significant, every student in the school's inaugural graduating class, of 2003, had passed the state math-and-literacy competency tests on the first try. (At the city's public schools, only the famed "exam" schools, like Boston Latin, matched this feat.) The entire class of 2003 now attends a four-year college.

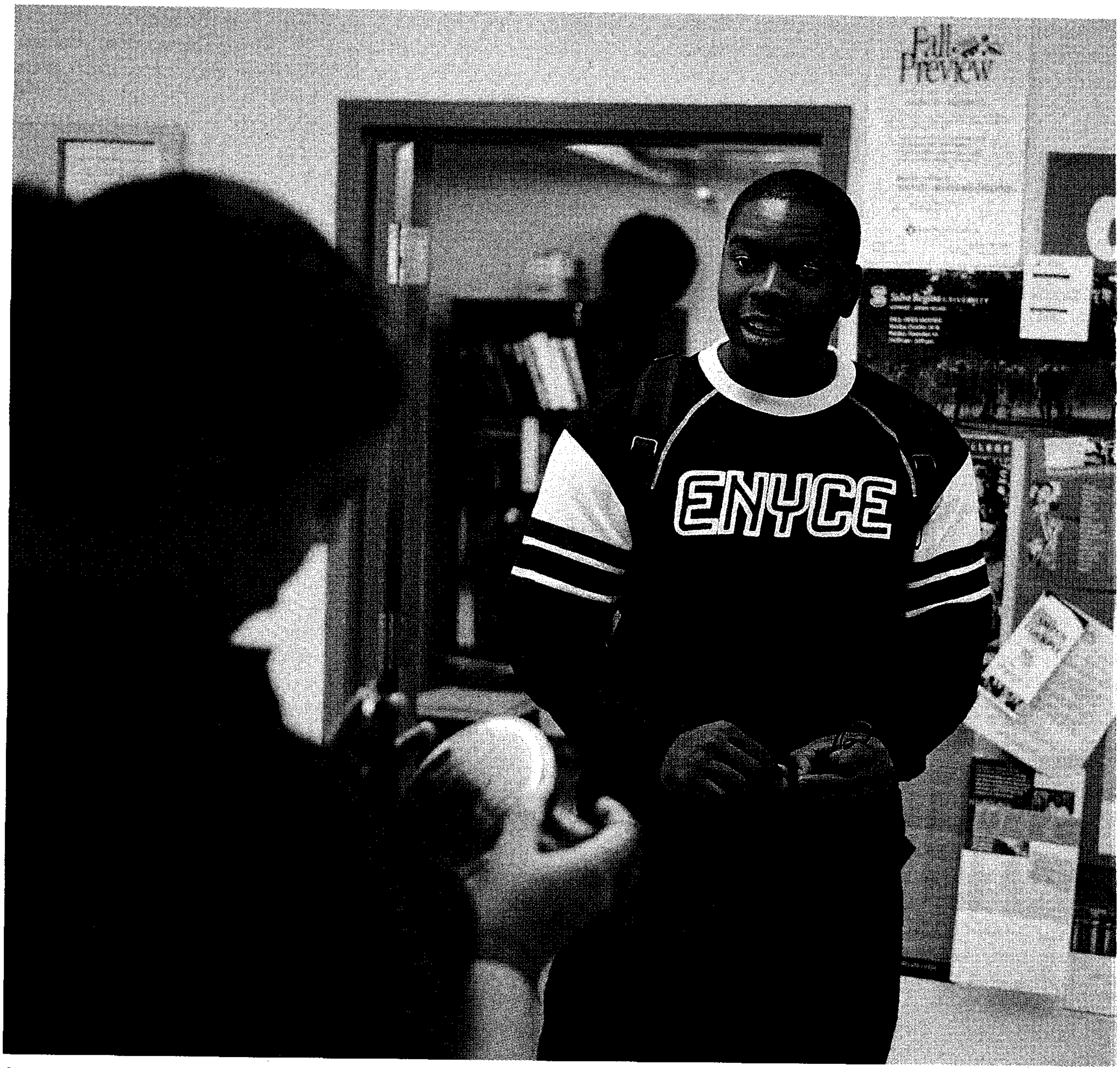


Pacific Rim teachers considered this success statistically meaningless. They had embarked on their experiment tentatively, beginning with a few sixth and seventh graders and adding a new grade each year; the class of 2003 was just eleven students. Nonetheless, this curiosity cabinet of a school enlarged. By September of 2003, there were three hundred and thirty students; the new batch of sixth graders had been selected by lottery from a list of applicants four times that large. The faculty absorbed this growth with both pride and fear. School achievement is the key to ending racial inequality, they'd tell college friends who were now writing legal briefs or bundling bonds. It's the civil-rights issue of our time. Among themselves, they indulged in self-doubt. While many Americans and the politicians who serve them concentrate on what inner-city kids shouldn't do—have babies, drop out, collect welfare, sell drugs—Pacific Rim emphasizes accomplishment, and not just in the form of a post-high-school job or a military enlistment. The school wanted to see every single student enter college, America's escalator to the middle and upper classes.

"Welcome to our awkward adolescent stage of growth," Pacific Rim's director, Spencer Blasdale, said one rainy morning last fall. Despite fashion pointers volunteered by his charges, Blasdale, a wiry thirty-six-year-old, was wearing wide-wale corduroy trousers that grew soggy as he paced the sidewalk in front of the school, shaking the hands of backpack-laden kids. "Nice to see you, Savannah. Good morning, gentlemen—and, please, your chains." In response, jewelry that had been exhibited on bus and train rides across Boston—some students had been travelling for an hour and a half—disappeared beneath collars of the maroon polo shirts that the school required. Blasdale wiped the raindrops from the lenses of his spectacles and fretted. "I want to think that good things happen here, but I'm probably not the best person to wave the banner," he said. "I'm always worrying about where we are weak. Take the Advanced Placement tests in English. Our kids are scoring very low on the essays—one of several signs we're not doing enough to promote analytical writing. We're trying to work on that this year."

That, and a thousand other things. Massachusetts, like most other states, was in a budget crisis last fall, and in the state legislature support was gathering for a moratorium on charter schools, which were said to siphon money that the regular public schools needed. (Of the state's eight-billion-dollar schools budget, the charters consumed 1.5 per cent.) In a white middle-class neighborhood just south of Pacific Rim's industrial strip, opposition was simmering, too, as residents registered the presence of many young new neighbors. Meanwhile, although enrollment had surged, Blasdale had just been forced to cut four faculty positions. In the days before school began, the remaining twenty-seven teachers had decorated the hallways with notices of internships at the zoo and the Museum of Science. Their own workspace had a fresh posting, too: a *Times* article predicting "one of the most austere school years in memory."

Thirty years ago, Boston became emblematic of the futility of American efforts to achieve educational equity, when an attempt to desegregate public schools by busing children from neighborhood to neighborhood inspired riots and racial violence. In subsequent decades, many other prescriptions for improving the educational prospects of low-income and minority children have been hazarded: less bureaucracy, more funding, smaller class size, a computer on every desktop, back-to-basics, phonics. This decade's fix is a federal law called No Child Left Behind, whose theoretical pillars are accountability and market competition. Passed by Congress in 2001, No Child Left Behind is seen on the right as the greatest domestic achievement of George W. Bush, and on the left as an underfunded, punitive assault on public schools and teachers' unions. The law mandates "standards-based" testing across the nation, to expose schools

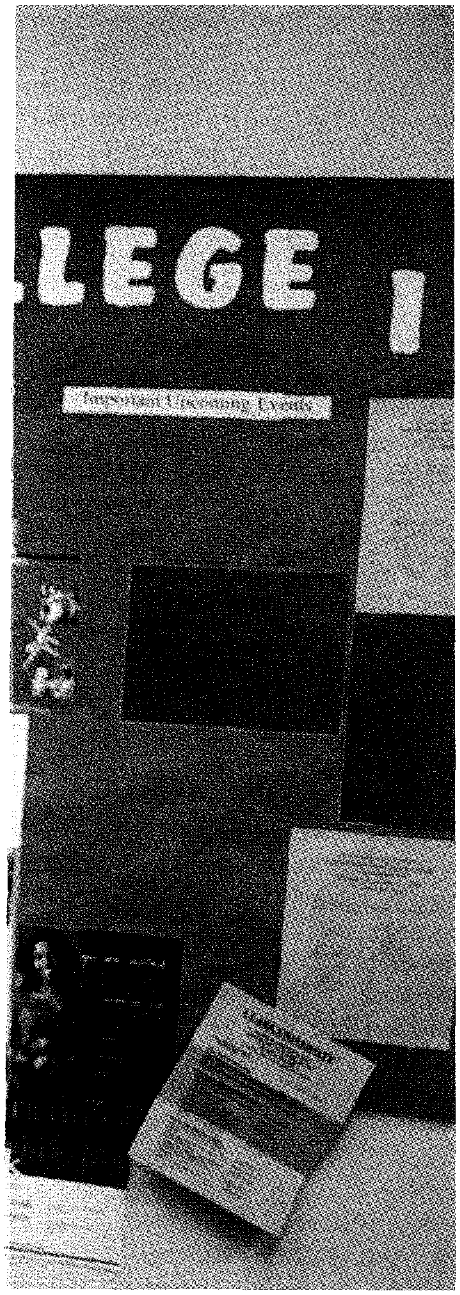


Rousseau Mieze, with Elizabeth Weston, one of his favorite teachers. Start forcing yourself out of your comfort zone, she had ur

that are failing their students; it also supports the creation of more charter-school alternatives like Pacific Rim, in order to incite productive educational rivalries. Thus far, however, most charter schools are not like Pacific Rim: according to a recent, much discussed analysis of U.S. Department of Education figures, charter-school students nationwide score worse than their public-school counterparts. Although charters serve a more disadvantaged population, their unexceptional early showing has tended to reinforce the hopelessness that many Americans already feel about urban education.

"Everybody's looking for the hundred-per-cent solution," Blasdale said. "And when they find it call me, I'm there. But in the meantime, as one of my principal friends likes to say, I'll take a hundred one-per-cent solutions instead." Of the urban schools he admired, public and charter, he had noticed two not particularly cost-efficient consistencies. They were small enough for each child to be known, and staffed with smart, loving, relatively autonomous teachers. But how to find those teachers was something that No Child Left Behind didn't answer. Blasdale's faculty, four of whom had advanced degrees from Ivy League schools, earned an annual salary of about forty thousand dollars. Calculated at an hourly rate, this wasn't much more than several of the seniors commanded working after school at Krispy Kreme. Blasdale's teachers worked in spite of, not because of, market incentive, and the effort to actually leave no child behind in the course of the 2003-04 school year would drive a few of them out of the profession.

Of the twenty-four kids starting senior year last September, Blasdale felt confident about the college prospects of, perhaps, six—all bright, motivated girls. The rest were not, in the shorthand, "givens." There was a sloe-eyed long-distance runner who was prone to moodiness and confusion, and whose mother had been forced to give him up because



—and get ready for the challenge of college.

of her own mental state; a brilliant girl given to incapacitating depression; a spirited boy with acute developmental problems whose mother had sent him to Pacific Rim after he was robbed at a public school; another "special-needs" boy, who arrived at school just after dawn and sometimes stayed until nine at night, lingering in the parking lot with faculty as they discussed the difference between political and social democracy, before someone drove him home. On paper, he had his share of diagnoses; at school, he was an intelligent, iconoclastic kid intent on going to a four-year college in Maine. Blasdale suspected—correctly, it turned out—that this would happen. Children with sensational burdens weren't necessarily the hardest to help; they often found a home inside the school and excelled. The students who made Blasdale panic were the resisters.

Of the seniors, the leading resister was Dwayne, a handsome kid with a wispy mustache who was cagier about his intellectual gifts than he was about his life in the streets. When not hanging with friends outside his public-housing complex, he crammed the margins of Orwell's "1984" and Robert Dahl's "On Democracy" with ideas about fairer societies. In class, though, he preferred to shrug and to sleep. "When there is no governmental authority, do individuals still have rights?" his government teacher asked one day, to which he responded in song. "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows the sorrow," he crooned, one eyebrow cocked, as his classmates tried to swallow their howls. After six years at Pacific Rim, Dwayne was still unable to risk letting others see him striving.

Blasdale had studied at Princeton and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where some child-development theorists suggested that by early adolescence many urban kids were already past the point of help. At Pacific Rim, though, he had seen his share of transformations. One of them was Dwayne's friend Rousseau.

Emotionally troubled, said teachers in some of the schools that Rousseau had attended before Pacific Rim. "The cliché angry black boy," Rousseau himself said. In his first years at Pacific Rim, his mother had been summoned to school for discipline conferences with such frequency that it threatened her ability to make a living. Cleaning houses and office buildings, she earned about three hundred and fifty dollars a week, with which she supported not just her son but a stream of family members emigrating from Haiti. (Rousseau's father is a self-employed taxi-driver, and he and Cazilda are separated.) "I don't know what to do with this child, but I do know I need to pay my bills," she told the teachers. "Please, just do what you can." And so they had.

One September morning, a local news anchor announced, "Five shootings, one stabbing, eight hours." Rousseau made his way down Pacific Rim's crowded, locker-lined hall to the library, an airy room of tables and books, most of them secondhand. At one table, a graceful, long-limbed girl named Sarabina advised a friend about the S.A.T.s: "You gotta do them mad fast, because they'll be saying, 'Put your pencil down,' and you've got eight questions left." Rousseau had a thing for Sarabina. Her father, an itinerant preacher, was strict, and she hadn't chafed, as Rousseau had, at Pacific Rim's regimented culture. Now she was interning at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, trying to decide whether she wanted to do premed next year.

"That's a good-but-in-the-woods college," Sarabina's friend was saying of Hamilton College; they were "trading skinny" on the schools. "In my top ten," Sarabina agreed, "but not my very top." Rousseau surveyed the room. Dwayne was at one table, sleeping. Marcus, the "Gin and Juice" translator, was at another, turning raw data into frequency distributions and then plotting them on a graph. The morning's lesson combined science and statistics, and required students to do the kind of independent research that might await them in college. Rousseau dropped his book bag onto Marcus's table and settled into a seat. Having a "top ten" was a chance he'd already squandered. He just wanted one decent four-year college, preferably situated very far from Roxbury.

"Yo, my slow bro," Rousseau said to Marcus. In response, Marcus raised his eyebrows into perfect circumflexes—his catchall rejoinder, that month, to slights. Rousseau used to be able to provoke him, but this was senior year. Everyone was trying to focus. Sighing, Rousseau set to work on what would be a yearlong senior project, a study of benthic macroinvertebrates and their substrate preferences. He kept himself alert by rapping a song he'd heard on MTV's "Making the Band" the night before:

> I'm way ahead of the game, thuggin' runs in my veins.
> My pocket's chubby, so I went and got a gun in my name.
> It's just me, him and my blunt in the Range.

Soon Marcus was rapping, too; they were virtuosos at recalling lyrics. Today, though, Rousseau's mind drifted. "Marcus," he said, "let me ask you something. Have you ever wondered about the literacy levels on that show? There was that one night, remember, where the one guy could barely read—he was seriously struggling—and the other guys in the band just started making fun of him. But as I've been watching I'm realizing the other guys can hardly read, either. I mean, they can read, but they're not . . . fluent."

Marcus was smart; of course he'd noticed. "Loves their illiteracies like a fat kid loves cake," he said. "Not good, not funny." He looked down at his half-plotted data and, frowning, began to erase what he'd just done. "This—not good, either. I'm frozen here on the y-axis."

"Me, too—standard deviation." Rousseau pivoted in his chair. "Mr. Wood?"

David Wood, a gifted teacher with a Ph.D., had taught Rousseau science twice before. For some of that time, Rousseau had undermined him, inventing excuses tailored to make a teacher lose heart. "What do people expect?" Rousseau would say upon ditching an assignment. "I'm just another low-achieving black male." But Wood had an earnest, Midwestern way of keeping after Rousseau—"gift for science," "leadership ability"—so that, eventually, when Rousseau laughed at the teacher it seemed a little like denying his own worth. A lot of Rousseau's teachers, it occurred to him in retrospect, had been sneaky that way.

"The male lead in the school play—made for you, Rousseau."

"Can you give us a hand judging these summer-internship proposals?"

"Rousseau, there's a ninth grader who says he's going to leave school. Can you find him and do what you can?"

That ninth grader changed his mind. When he wanted to, Rousseau knew, he could make an argument—an intellectual facility that helped him get by. After a few minutes absorbing his classmates' questions about Machiavelli, he could pick up a theme and argue so assuredly in the opposite direction that his teachers thought he had actually read the book. Then they began catching on.

"That's the interesting thing about science, Rousseau," Wood was saying now. "There's no answer in the back of the book. You're collecting your own data and then analyzing them to find the answer. And statistics is the tool that helps you figure out what's going on."

"But this, what I've got here—is it right?"

"We're experimenting," Wood said. "There's more than one way to be right."

Rousseau considered his very existence to be a question, and he had looked at the data. Four hundred times in four years, at least, his teachers asked him his favorite question: "What's the point? You ace a test, then ruin your average by not doing the homework. Why the self-sabotage, Rousseau?" As the fall progressed, he'd been mulling a variety of explanations—one or two of which might be rendered persuasive in college-application essays.

"It's easier to write an explanation when you actually understand why," he said. The up-from-poverty narrative seemed to be what some people wanted from kids like him, but pride militated against this "pitiful" genre. Moreover, Rousseau believed in personal responsibility.

Taking a comic approach to his own story was more fun: the pudgy character with no-name clothes and crooked teeth who decides to devote his intellectual energy not to homework but to strategies of retaliation against his teasers. An alternate explanation came to mind during the Bible study he did at the church across from his apartment: his home had been inhabited by demons. But, whatever explanation he might use to justify underachievement, colleges might want a cure: the moment at which the right path lit up, and down you ran.

"It was then that I realized I had been lying to myself," he typed one day. Another day: "That night, I made the decision to give my life over to Christ."

Even after finding religion, however, the "state of being Rou" was a fluid condition, and he, like his teachers, couldn't neatly account for the days or weeks when motivation drained away. There were only questions, like the one he asked one afternoon when he caught up with Patrick McAllister, his twelfth-grade English teacher, in front of the school. McAllister, a Boston-raised Irish Catholic with a sly sense of humor, was a guy with whom, students said, "you could go deep."

"Mr. McAllister, it's interesting about that play—reading it and then seeing it performed, you start to think about it differently. Like, what if Oedipus knew?"

"Knew what, Rousseau?" McAllister asked, folding his arms and leaning back as if he didn't have a faculty meeting in five minutes.

"Well, we're supposed to think he's an innocent searching for an answer who gets destroyed by what he finds out, right? But maybe what he wanted wasn't to discover the curse but to grab his mother and the other guys by the collar and make them admit what he'd already figured out, so he wouldn't feel so crazy. Like, he just wanted them to stop denying things and say it: 'Oedipus, on the real, the choices you were making didn't count for anything. The way you were born, you didn't have a chance.' "

One November day, the sixth-grade winners of the admissions lottery settled into turquoise metal chairs and mismatched desks beside a bulletin board adorned with their self-described academic goals for the year:

"STAY FOCAS."

"PAST THE SIX GRADE!"

Ervens and Shawrod, Jewrisha and Ivanna and Ivelisse: eventually Blasdale and his colleagues would know the test scores and family situations behind those names. They would learn which ones possessed the social advantages peculiar to the sixth grade, like being champs at double Dutch, and which ones would react to a routine fire drill by collapsing, distraught, on the floor. For now, though, the children's histories typically consisted of a few words on school-transfer forms—an absence of data that seemed fitting. Teachers at their new school preferred to begin with the exuberant, if untenable, assumption that every child thrown in their path could succeed.

As sixth graders scrambled into a classroom, some of them wearing khaki pants optimistically large, a regal young teacher named Elizabeth Weston rose from her desk and raised her hand, palm forward—the signal at Pacific Rim for silence, respect. The students responded in kind. Weston and her colleagues could occasionally demonstrate a vaudevillian vocal range, but the volume in the classroom was typically lower. Although class sizes were as large as those in nearby public schools, a student who disrupted teaching at Pacific Rim, or even turned his back on a teacher, faced parents, principal, and a round of intense behavioral instruction.

The emphasis on discipline was balanced by a student's closeness to his assigned "academic adviser"—the staff member whom students thought of as "belonging to me." This adviser followed a child's progress from grade to grade, fought for his interests, got to know his parents, and helped him with his algebra. At Pacific Rim, teachers spent nearly a quarter of their work lives tutoring and counselling individual students. There were Sundays spent wandering the Museum of Fine Arts, or biking in the Blue Hills; there were late-night crisis phone calls. And for eight hours a day there was class.

Weston, who is an African-American, had studied English and psychology at Williams. "I love to read your independent-reading logs," she told the sixth graders as she collected the previous night's assignment. She paused to make eye contact with a boy in the back row who was removing from his earlobe a clip-on cubic-zirconia earring. "Your notes are examples of your thinking. This is how I know what's in your brain."

A hand went up. "I left mines in my backpack—can I get it?"

"Yes, you can. You also lose a recess break. Do you know why?"

"I said 'mines,' not 'mine'?"

"That's right. Now, people, tell me: what do I expect of you when you are reading? Steven!"

"Write down the main ideas as we read!"

"Yes! And what else?"

"Put down any questions and thoughts we have in the margins."

"Yes! And what else? Can anyone tell me? Well, I see one big gap in this list we're making. I see an abyss. I see a chasm."

"Words we don't understand!"

"Yes. When you don't understand a word, look it up in the dictionary and write down the definition." As she spoke, she sketched on the whiteboard two tree-lined cliffs with the letters "c-h-a-s-m" stretching between them. "The 'h' is silent in the word 'chasm,' isn't it, Leonard?" she said conspiratorially. Leonard turned to his classmates to confirm.

Weston and the other sixth-grade teachers shed this unblinking authority at Wednesday-afternoon faculty meetings, when they sat cross-legged on the floor with Doritos, M&M's, and a long list of "students of concern":

"It's not just that he's angrier than ever this year, but I'm finding his explanations less comprehensible. I've tried what I can think of, and I'm at the point of thinking he needs special-ed testing sooner rather than later. Do we wait, see another trimester come and go, when he's not learning and not getting help, either? Maybe they'll find nothing, but what's the harm in doing the tests?"

"But there is harm. You tell the family we want to do the testing, all odds are they tell the child, and there are consequences to that. The question is, have we done everything we can to figure out what's going on—to watch, listen, experiment, try to reach him ourselves before we risk the label?"

On the floor below, teachers in higher grades were having similar conversations, agonizing first about the students who'd spent their summer vacations deciding whether or not to live another year:

"I don't want to put too much stress on her to catch up, but where's the line we draw? I can't just promote her. Should we speak to the parents?"

"Her attendance problems are worse at home than they are here."

"I found the mother to be an easier way in than the father."

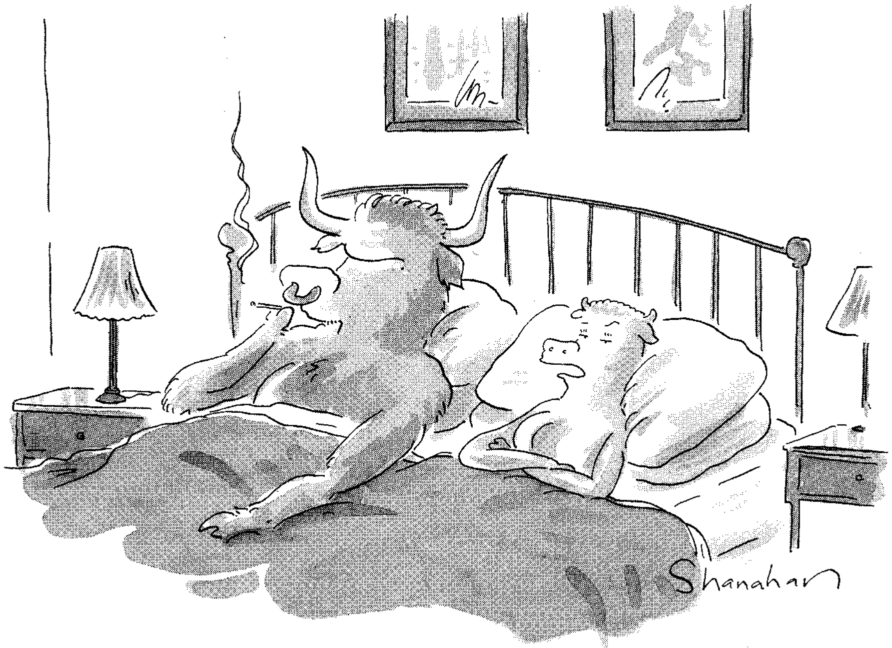
And then they turned to Dwayne, perennial student of concern. To their surprise, he had recently produced an eloquent oral history of his grandmother. Shortly after writing it, he was among a crew of boys arrested for jumping a guy and stealing his cell phone. It was the moment, teachers decided, to put the press on Dwayne's intellectual side.

"There's more engagement with the literature than he lets on. It's like over the summer when Mr. Berman gave him that book about two kids growing up in the projects. He was totally loving it, but he also made Mr. Berman promise not to tell anyone he'd taken it home. The interest about racial identity and class is something we've got to tap into, turn the anger into something literary, creative."

"There's this group of artists downtown who do interesting work with at-risk kids. I'll make a call."

The teachers had recently given up a much anticipated annual raise. While many charter schools rely on foundation grants and individual donations to supplement their public allotment—around ninety-six hundred dollars per pupil in Boston—contributions didn't necessarily increase with good academic results. "B.F.P.," teachers said to one another, shrugging—bleak financial picture, one not improved when some students broke into a classroom and stole three hundred dollars that parents had raised during a book fair.

For those teachers, the consolation—a considerable one—was the company of passionate, analytical colleagues. The dilemma at places like Pacific Rim was that people who loved to be with and

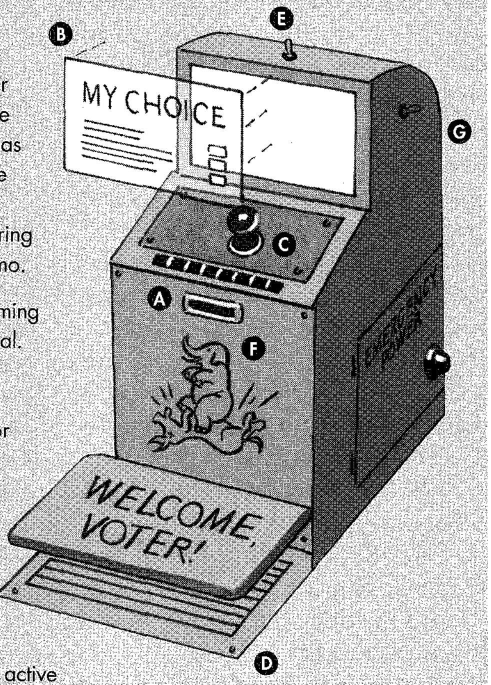


"Olé."

SKETCHBOOK BY BRUCE McCALL

Congratulations on the purchase of your new Landslide MK 1, custom-built to automatically produce overwhelming majorities every time by avoiding such old-fashioned annoyances as registration drives and voters—and so advanced that it flashes the winner's name even before the polls open. Behind the Landslide MK 1 stand not only an unlimited warranty but also thousands of hours of dedicated lobbying and millions of dollars of precision-aimed political contributions, designed to insure the Right result every time. Enjoy!

OPERATOR INSTRUCTIONS
LANDSLIDE MK 1 AUTOMATIC ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE



WARNINGS!

⚠ Never attempt to remove the rear panel of the Landslide MK 1. The Attorney General of the United States has ruled that this, or any attempt to retrieve a record of total votes cast from your Landslide MK 1, constitutes vote tampering and can result in a one-way trip to Gitmo.

⚠ Sudden vibrations and smoke coming from the Landslide MK 1 is normal. This is an indication that the "Divide and Conquer" cycle has commenced, automatically multiplying every vote for Ralph Nader by five.

KNOW YOUR CONTROLS

Ⓐ African-American Sensor. Programmed to initiate the "NOT A REGISTERED VOTER" screen display and to sound an alarm buzzer that remains active until the African-American is removed.

Ⓑ Dummy "MY CHOICE" touch-screen display. Brings up graphic showing all candidates' names and party affiliations. Do not be alarmed: this is a credibility-enhancement illusion device only.

Ⓒ Dummy voting button marked "CAST VOTE."

Ⓓ Foot plate. The weight of a voter stepping onto the foot plate silently signals the vote-counting mechanism to register a vote for the Right party. All other "voting" controls and mechanisms are nonfunctional voter-diversion devices meant to help insure a smooth and riot-free poll-station experience. Note: Inquisitive voters will be informed that foot plate eliminates hazard of radon gas leaking from polling-place basement below.

Ⓔ "PRESS HERE FOR VOTE TALLY" button and printout slot. Nonfunctional. See D above.

Ⓕ Elephant-stomping-donkey subliminal voter-conditioning graphic. Should be kept visible at all times.

Ⓖ Manual-override balloting switch. Allows votes to be cast from remote locations by preapproved dead persons, felons, and illegal immigrants.

STARTING UP

1. Install in a dark space not visible to independent poll-watchers.

2. Stand back. Operation is 100 per cent automatic.

3. Five minutes before the polls open, the final vote count will appear on the display screen.*

*To determine the final vote count, turn the red dial marked "EMERGENCY POWER—DO NOT TOUCH" to the numbers desired—e.g., Bush 45,689; Kerry 12; 11 invalid—and press to LOCK.

Florida State Voting Commission
SEAL OF APPROVAL

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think about kids tended, sooner or later, to have some themselves. Once that happened, sixty-hour weeks for low pay were even less appealing. In October, Blasdale's deputy, a brilliant and intuitive woman named Piel Hollingsworth, had her first child; during labor, she had called Blasdale twice to deal with student matters. After the baby was born, her priorities changed; with some anguish, she had decided that she would not return full time the following year. Blasdale's wife wished that he could redirect some of the time he spent with three hundred and thirty adolescents in perpetual states of crisis to their two-year-old at home. Their second child was due in June.

Blasdale and his faculty spoke often about the balance between rigor and rescue. Demand a lot from students like Rousseau and Dwayne, and risk damaging their G.P.A.s and their chance at college admission. Demand little, and when the students get to college they'll fail. There were times when rescue won out, and an ode to Tupac Shakur slipped by as literary analysis. That didn't happen regularly, though; as a consequence, many students, particularly younger ones, were less than grateful to be there. While adolescent rage has infinite wellsprings, many complaints could be distilled to these: Pacific Rim stripped you of your logos and jewelry, your ways of speaking, and your means of defending yourself. Its teachers plotted behind your back, sometimes nosing into family things. Then, if your invaded, denuded self didn't live up to the school's high standards, they wouldn't even expel you. They'd imprison you in the homework center at the end of the official school day—more hours, and even more attention, with people from the place you despised.

Pacific Rim did have one seductive treat—a chance to go on a trip to China, where all those Mandarin lessons could be put to use. But that was twelve days out of the fourteen hundred or so that a kid would spend in this place before graduating. Moreover—and this mattered to students, a lot—Pacific Rim didn't look like a proper school. Not far away were several new public schools with high windows, smooth dark running tracks, and bleached-wood basketball courts. At Rousseau's instigation, Pacific Rim had started a basketball team, too.

But the school day was too long, and money for transportation too scarce, for the team to compete seriously. Besides, the old factory had no gym, just a small, cracked blacktop outside. On clement days, a rubber ball and scuffed orange traffic cones would be set out on the blacktop for recess.

Another respite from academics came after lunch, when students pulled on rubber gloves and scoured the tables and the floor in the cafeteria. This was both a cost-saving measure and one of several ways that the teachers conveyed to the students something crucial: that the school's existence depended on them. It was not, however, fun, and many Pacific Rim students shrieked with relief at the end of the day. Packing onto public buses, they joined contemporaries from what they called "normal" schools, or from no school at all. One day, as the bus wended past Haitian groceries, auto-parts stores, and several evicted families trying to sell off the goods that marshals had piled on the sidewalk—such "flee markets" were frequent in gentrifying southern Boston—a toothless young man in a skullcap struck up a conversation with two Pacific Rim girls. "Well, I gots a diploma, too," he told them. "My diploma said, 'Get the Fuck Outta Here.' " One of the girls looked at the other and laughed. "If only our teachers would kick us out."

To begin their Pacific Rim school day, the middle-school students said a Japanese word in unison: *gambatte*, which roughly translates as "persevere." By the end of those school days, teachers, more often than not, had also found occasion to say this word to themselves.

As the Christmas holidays approached, the yearbook staff prepared a ballot for senior superlatives. In keeping with school culture, categories like "most popular" and "prettiest" were rejected in favor of "most helpful," "best writer," and "most likely to become a teacher at Pacific Rim." Rousseau was chosen "most noticeable," and, had the seniors conducted a vote regarding the faculty, his counterpart would have been a tiny, driven college counsellor named Doreen Kelly-Carney. Kelly-Carney, who was forty years old, had, in a previous generation, won the lottery that some of her kids played now: born to low-income teen-age parents, she'd received undergraduate and master's degrees from Harvard. Kids and college admissions had both grown more complicated since.

Kelly-Carney had been hammering her charges since junior year with the expectation that they would at least try the college-application process. To this end, the school's post-industrial setting was not just poignant but persuasive: from the window of the science lab, anyone could see that there would be few manufacturing jobs awaiting him at graduation. Still, as deadlines approached, several seniors balked. Some parents balked, too, declining to fill out financial-aid forms that they considered invasions of their privacy. Other parents inflated their incomes as a matter of pride. Kelly-Carney negotiated gently with the parents. With students like Dwayne, whom she had known for six years, she was blunt. "O.K., so maybe all these colleges will reject you," she said. "Make them do it. Don't reject yourself first." Kelly-Carney had worked in the admissions office at Harvard before coming to Pacific Rim, and she respected the college process's capacity to surprise.

Although many affluent white college applicants presume that their black, urban counterparts have enormous advantages, Kelly-Carney was aware of studies that showed that more than three-quarters of the beneficiaries of affirmative action at selective colleges were affluent and middle-class. Among low-income kids of all races, attendance at selective colleges has declined in the past twenty years, in part because college costs have risen faster than federal and college aid for needy students. The students affected by the new economic equation weren't the athletes or the top students, of course. They were the middling kids like Rousseau, whose freestyle raps had lately explored this phenomenon:

> You be the minority, preferably black?
> The new social profiling is green in fact.

Like most of the faculty, Kelly-Carney had fallen for Rousseau's intelligent, independent voice, his honesty, and his unusually strong sense of justice. As for his G.P.A.—well, it was too late for lectures. To better his odds, she encouraged him to apply to thirteen schools.

For his college essay, Rousseau had settled on an account of his school trip to China, where villagers screamed, "You N.B.A.? Shaquille O'Neal?" when they saw him, and where he'd overcome his urge to stereotype them, too. He had fine-tuned the prose with Elizabeth Weston, to whom he'd grown close when she ran the homework center. "All us knuckleheads got to know Ms. Weston pretty well," he said. Now even Rousseau's mother considered Weston family.

Rousseau's mother had been a good student in Haiti, but by the time her son reached middle school his English and math skills outmatched hers. Nonetheless, Cazilda, too, had college anxieties. With tuition bills in mind, she'd recently added several freelance hair-relaxing jobs and a course at a local cosmetology school to her work schedule. Hard labor was "in her genes," she said, and, having studied the evolution of Roxbury's shopping strips, she regarded nail gluing and hair styling as growth professions. Although she suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure, and had no medical insurance, she was deft at emotional triage. The greatest harm would be to have no college financing to worry about.

Pacific Rim, seeking to minimize that possibility, had recommended Rousseau to a nonprofit organization called the Posse Foundation, which worked with selective colleges to identify and tutor urban public-high-school kids who might otherwise be overlooked. One evening, the Posse people invited Rousseau to join several dozen other kids in a preliminary competition at a local community center. There, they sat around in small groups discussing abortion politics and developments in robotics, as Posse evaluators listened. It was nerve-racking, Rousseau thought, trying to make intelligent conversation while trying to mind-read the people wandering behind you. But he also understood his own position:

> Situation's dire
> Verbal vernacular for hire.

His fluency served him, and he was invited to the next round, a personal interview in an office as colorful and self-consciously optimistic as Pacific Rim.

One by one, the seniors who had arrived before him were following pretty young women into interview rooms. Rousseau didn't want to dwell on the competition, so he focussed instead on the décor: cool red chairs, beakers full of Snickers bars, a boom box on which OutKast and Alicia Keys played. People were trying to make him feel comfortable, Rousseau sensed, and he might have found this patronizing if the atmosphere hadn't pleased him so well. He took a closer look at the photographs that covered the walls—minority scholarship kids kicking it at Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, wherever, looking happier in every single shot than most humans ever get to feel.

Studying the photographs, Rousseau was surprised to see Felix, a Roxbury guy he'd jostled with in pickup basketball games. Felix hadn't been around lately; the guys Rousseau played ball with often disappeared. It hadn't occurred to Rousseau that Felix had been hiding at Hamilton College. The boy had never let on that he was smart.

Rousseau had been praying over this Posse business, and seeing Felix was, while not a sign, exactly, at least suggestive. By the time he sat down to be interviewed, he felt confident. By the time he stood up, he felt more so. He wasn't too surprised, a few days later, to learn that he was in the Posse finals.

He's stepping with some newness
What problems? He can do this.

Again, the Posse finalists gathered in small groups, this time with college admissions officers present. Rousseau's group was asked to solve some campus disputes, as if they were college honchos themselves. Rousseau, hearing the assignment, brightened. Having been a honcho—well, a student-government leader—at Pacific Rim, he'd sorted through a number of pitched, emotional battles. But then came the specific problem: parents who refused to let their kids be taught by a homosexual teacher.

His church in Roxbury didn't accept homosexuality. College admissions officers, he suspected, didn't share this point of view. Rousseau couldn't sell out the church he believed had saved his soul, nor did he wish to sound "like a gay-bashing jerk." In the pleasant conference room full of pleasant people, he felt emotionally trapped. And, long before the letter arrived to make it official, he sensed that his picture would not be hanging next year alongside Felix's in the room with the comfortable chairs.

The long-distance runner—the one prone to moodiness and confusion—arrived for a meeting with his adviser. He was carrying a dog-eared pocket dictionary and was shaking with anger. The room was the size of a broom closet, and in fact contained a broom, as well as the boy's alarmingly red-eyed adviser, Alexander Phillips. An exacting thirty-two-year-old history teacher, Phillips caught every virus his students brought to school.

"Mr. Phillips, I know the work, but the teachers aren't testing me right," the boy began, clenching and unclenching his jaw. "I mean, maybe I couldn't do it before, but I've got my disability fixed now, with the drugs. I've turned around a hundred and eighty degrees. I could have proved it to them, but they wouldn't let me." His body folded forward until the house key he wore on a lanyard dangled between his knees.

The boy had for years struggled to keep up with his classmates, and lately strange things had been happening in his mind. While on one level he knew this, as the months passed he preferred to retreat into a happier scenario, in which he would do well on his tests and win a track scholarship to Harvard. Many of Pacific Rim's teachers had known this boy for six years. They ached for his future, but they also knew that there was something they could do for him now. He had twice failed the state competency tests that were required for graduation. He had one more chance before June, and his teachers wanted him to have a high-school diploma. In the small room with Phillips, more than anywhere else, the boy could at times still trust his mind.

"You couldn't prove what you knew in the science quiz?" Phillips said between coughing fits. "Well, prove it to me, now."

The questions were rapid-fire, and as the boy reached for answers—"Colder water contains more oxygen than warmer water!"—his body began to unfold. Phillips, who had a pink, open face and was wearing a sweater vest, seemed to know when it was time to inch his chair closer to the boy, and when it was time to raise the stakes. In an hour, the boy faced a quiz on Thoreau.

"So: 'Life Without Principle.'"

The boy hunched up again. "I don't get that we're doing things so long in a short time—"

"What your teacher wants you to think about is what Thoreau believes in most, and why."

"That you shouldn't do things for money, that stuff, you know, I don't want to go too deep into the details."

"Mmm."

"He was . . . freethinking."

"About what? About capitalism? About labor?"

"Basically, he was hauling and making things, and he got critical."

Phillips opened the book and laid it on the table; a concrete object sometimes helped the boy to focus. "We don't give credit as a society to the proper people," the boy began again. "I think that is what Thoreau thought—that only the people with the money get the praise. It's like today, the large people, the athletes and actors, they get the stories and the Hollywood star. And the other ones, the lesser ones, do the things the large people say matter most, hoping that they will get a star, too. But the people who labor the hardest should really get the most credit. Like, today, how hard some people work, no one writes it down."

The boy pulled the book toward him. "Here is one place where he talks about it":

> The title wise is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men?—if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle?

Then the boy fingered a phrase that had troubled him: "It is wonderful how indifferent men of all classes are."

"Mr. Phillips, this word 'wonderful' is wrong."

"Thoreau is just using it differently. As you know, 'wonderful' usually means fantastic, but sometimes it also means what the word itself breaks into: full of wonder. An idea that makes you think."

"So something can be amazing," the boy replied after mulling it over, "whether it is happy or not."

"So why is the Invisible Man keeping all this junk in his briefcase?" McAllister asked the seniors, pacing. "Bledsoe's letters, the Sambo dolls, the broken bank—what is Ellison trying to convey?"

"He's carrying around the legacy—

these broken images that constitute the black man."

"Dwayne, excellent. It's like poetry, the way you put that."

The other seniors looked up, impressed. Poetry? Dwayne the resister?

Elizabeth Weston had been urging the class's other poet, Rousseau: Start forcing yourself out of your comfort zone, because you'll be out of it when you get to college. Boston's Four Seasons Hotel was farther out of that zone than she'd imagined. There, two hundred or so white people were celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Pioneer Institute, a conservative think tank that counted among its causes charter schooling; Rousseau, as a student-government leader, had been invited to say a few words before the columnist Charles Krauthammer made a foreign-policy address. Rousseau's best suit was not the "black tie" that had been called for on the invitation, but he didn't sweat it. There was novel information to process: the elderly black man handing out towels in the men's room, the gravity-defying chandeliers, the astonishment of filet mignon—although pre-speech anxiety interfered with full relish. A few days earlier, he had put his lines on paper: "I count it as a blessing from God that I came to a school like the Academy. It has prepared me for college and for life." But, when called up to the lectern, he forgot the speech in hand. He freestyled a little, advising the rich people, among other things, "*gambatte*," and when he finished, to his shock, they rose and cheered.

It was his life's first standing ovation; he worried that there would not be others. But, reliving the moment in his journal, he felt anger encroaching on his pride. "The powerful people (and the rich) must be doing the right things if this one boy (me) out of hundreds of thousands, is so well spoken," he wrote, with a sarcasm he rarely used in the journal. It was "so 'Invisible Man.' " Back in his defiant days, it had occurred to him that he might be perpetuating one stereotype. Now he feared that he was perpetuating another—a superficial success story that might be held against kids who lacked the chances he'd had. And even he, the privileged one, wasn't sure he was going to college.

By March, the appearance of the Virgin in the ophthalmology-clinic window had been discounted: chemical deposits, an inquiry of the archdiocese concluded, and most of the pilgrims dispersed. What criminologists had called the "Boston miracle"—a dramatic drop in violent crime during the nineteen-nineties—had been unravelling, too. In four days, three local teen-agers had been killed, and more shootings and stabbings followed, until the homicide rate was double the previous year's. On buses, kids began wearing yellow police tape around their arms and ankles, to commemorate or invent a closeness to the dead.

Rousseau, for one, was happy to keep a psychological distance. He and his mother had moved to a new neighborhood. There, he had been promptly jumped and robbed by seven kids his age. For months afterward, returning from school, he felt on edge. He had let his street smarts soften, when the college referendum on his future was suggesting that he might well need them:

Hamilton College: no.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: no.

George Washington University: no.

University of Massachusetts-Boston: no.

St. John's University: waitlist.

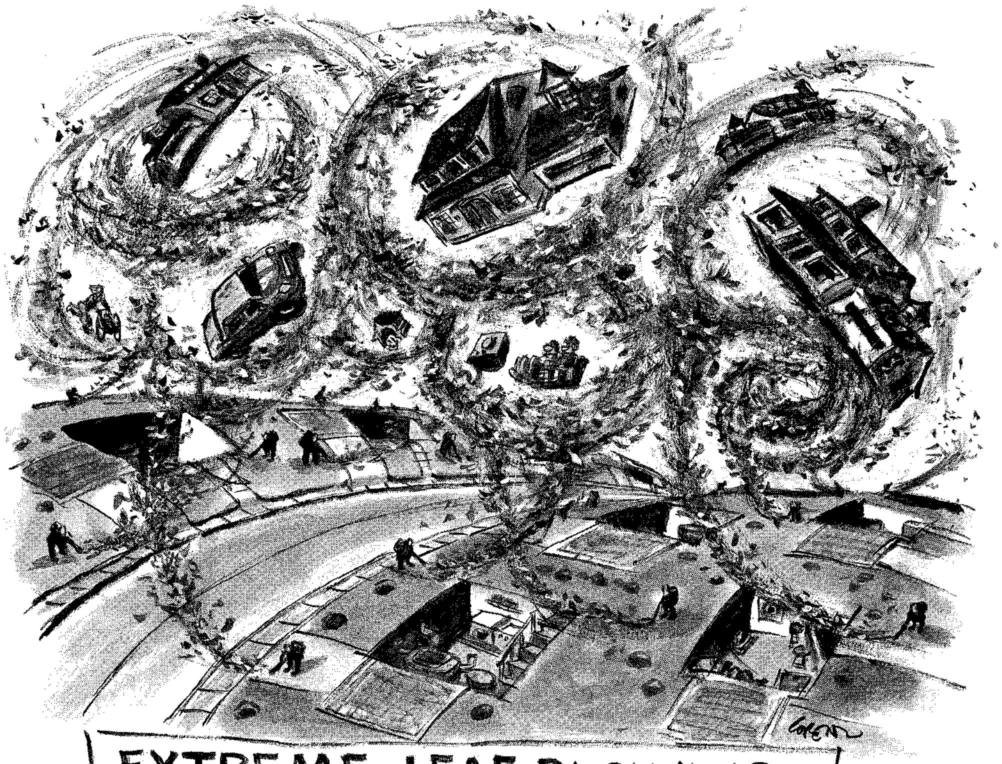
Northeastern University: if you do well next year in community college, maybe.

Williams College: if you do another year of high school, we'll give you a good, hard look.

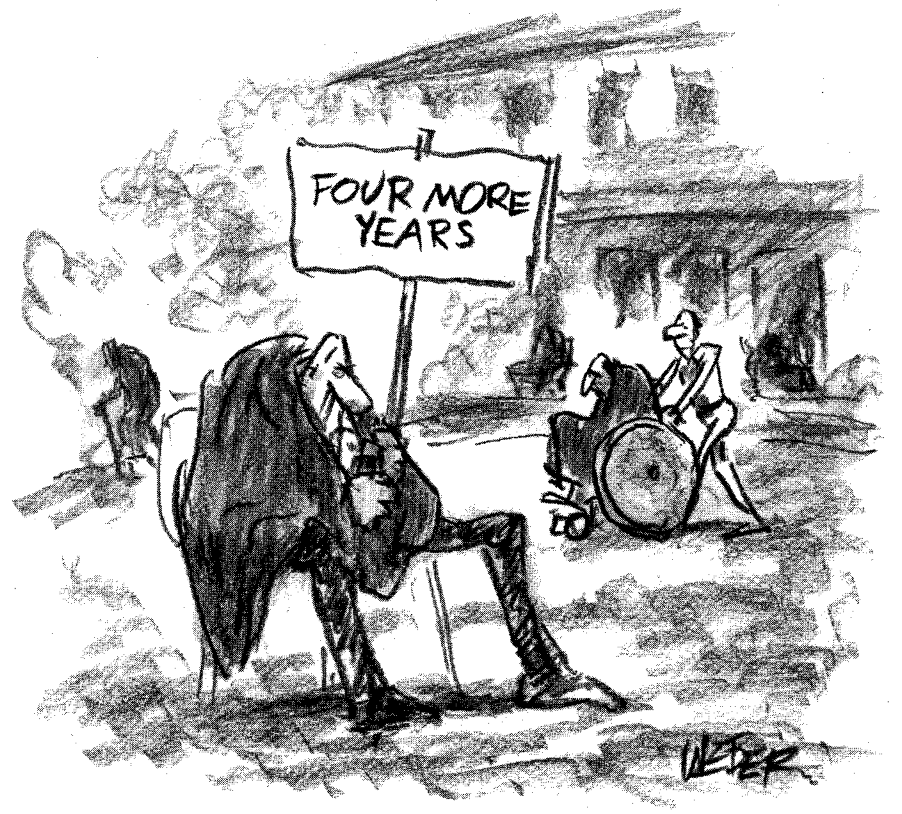
Marcus was choosing among the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Syracuse, and Ohio State. Sarabina, whose parents expected her to stay close to home, had accepted a scholarship from Boston College. A few months before, Rousseau had arranged to retake the S.A.T.—a last effort to improve his scores and compensate for his G.P.A. But then he forgot the date and slept through the test. In his notebook appeared lyrics too terse to be called freestyling:

I won't lie
Why
Try

One afternoon in Pacific Rim's library, Rousseau huddled with Kelly-Carney, the college counsellor, his enormous sneakers toe to toe with her red flats. "It's my own lack of discipline that caused this, but my mom and dad don't



EXTREME LEAF BLOWING



understand," he said. "They think everything is going to be fine. I can't stand to tell them anything now."

"There's still time, Rousseau, still schools you haven't heard from, and safer schools where it's not too late to apply," Kelly-Carney said. "At the University of Richmond, you'll be given geographic preference. Why don't we push to get you an interview? Once they meet you—well, to not do it would be doing yourself an injustice."

He held his head in his hands for a moment, then looked up.

"Ms. Kelly-Carney, it's just—I aimed too high."

One weekend, a teen-ager was robbed at knifepoint in a playground three blocks south of the school. "Factually and actually," as Pacific Rim kids like to say, no one from the school was involved. Yet somehow they were in deep. While the school was bordered on the north and east by train tracks and old factories, the southern side, where the playground was, faced Readville, one of Boston's white, middle-class enclaves. The mayor lived there, in one of the Cape-Cod style houses and peony-filled yards that evoked the age when good manufacturing jobs brought whole communities into being. With the armed robbery, the residents came together in a safety crusade. Among the identified threats: Pacific Rim kids who were turned loose in their neighborhood after school. As the days got warmer, some of them decided that they preferred Readville's well-tended, uncrowded playground to the ones awaiting them back home. And so Spencer Blasdale's phone began to ring.

Late spring was, for Blasdale, the season of Excel spreadsheets—a time of analyzing an influx of test scores and devising improvements for next year. Grave deficiencies were getting harder to find. On the Stanford 9 tests, the sixth graders under Elizabeth Weston and her fellow-teachers had risen from the thirty-ninth percentile, nationally, to the fifty-first. In math, they finished in the seventy-eighth percentile, a phenomenal accomplishment for an inner-city school, but an achievement that would be overshadowed by the state competency-test results of the tenth graders. Eighty-two per cent had demonstrated good or excellent skills in English, and ninety per cent had demonstrated such skills in math. Not one of the tenth graders had failed. And the troubled long-distance runner had not failed, either. On his final try, the senior earned the right to get his diploma.

Blasdale had little time to celebrate, however, and not only because his second daughter was about to arrive. Readville residents' children were afraid to use the swing sets. Pacific Rim teen-agers had been seen kissing on a Readville hill. And so he added to his list of daily duties an after-school walking tour of Readville.

"It's understandable," he said one cloudless day, heading from the old factory toward the park. "Kids in groups can be intimidating. We're trying to impress on the students that they're ambassadors for the school, and if I'm out here more, letting residents know what we're doing, I think things will be fine." He hated the thought of moving again and losing students in the process. "It's been tense, but once you meet people in the neighborhood, they're much nicer than you—" Suddenly, he stopped, inhaling sharply.

Across the quiet street, a blond woman with a baby stroller was approaching a corner. Around the corner, by a hedge, was a Pacific Rim sixth grader with his pants down.

Blasdale sped across the street. "I had to pee," the student said, putting things in and pulling things up. The woman with the stroller blithely passed.

Indecent exposure? Temperamental bladder? Later, after many painstaking discussions with the child and his family, Blasdale would have a better idea. But even now he knew that, to a skeptical community, the distinctions would be moot. The judgments of this neighborhood would not be too different from the judgments of the society at large.

In May, Pacific Rim seniors dawdled in the computer lab, planning their last weeks of high school.

"It's a tradition, like the prom. We've got to have a senior skip day."

"Should it be a Friday? Whose house can we kick it at? Dwayne?"

A voice came from behind a computer. "Y'all go. I can't be with it."

"Dwayne, you can't be serious. Every other day's senior skip day in your calendar."

"My grandma would kill me. Anyway, I've got to do my government paper."

Dwayne continued to assure his teachers that college meant little to him—vocational, recreational, whatever. The page he designed for himself in the yearbook featured wads of twenty-dollar bills. But the act of applying to college had helped to remind him that places beyond Boston existed. To his mild embarrassment, he had just won a school achievement award for great improvement in math.

"Now I'm analyzing community policing from the other side," he told the senior-skip-day plotters. He'd been fired up by a book that a teacher had given him, "The Tipping Point," one chapter of which examined a dramatic decrease in crime in New York City. "From where I stand, here in Boston there's more say-so than actual police," he said. "Increased law-enforcement presence, closeness to the people—sure you're going to hear about it in the papers, but the numbers don't add up when you look at them. Or maybe they add up in headquarters, but not in South End or Grove Hall or Roxbury."

The plotters sidled away.

"*I can see clearly now the rain has gone, I can see all obstacles in my way . . .*"

In one room, the chorus was injecting some Caribbean groove into a seventies standard, in preparation for the graduation finale. Down the hall, an uncommonly relaxed Doreen Kelly-Carney was tackling senior-class questions about hot plates—whether colleges would let you have them in your dorm room. The process was over, the verdicts were in, and Pacific Rim seniors had done spectacularly well.

Elisa had chosen Williams over Smith. Kim had a full scholarship to Bryn Mawr. Ike had picked Syracuse, Melissa chose Simmons, and Suzie was Wellesley-bound. Simone, the first person in her extended family to finish high school in a quarter century, was going to Hampton. Jasmynn would be continuing her Mandarin studies at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. But the shocker of the season was Dwayne, who had followed one of Kelly-Carney's Hail Mary strategies: apply to a place where there won't be too many other applicants like you. As gang conflict escalated in his neighborhood, a small liberal-arts college in the hills of New Hampshire offered to pay his way.

Rousseau had been less fortunate. He had finished the year with high honors and been accepted off the waiting list at St. John's University. Then he saw the offer of financial aid. Maybe his parents had filled out the forms wrong. Maybe St. John's didn't want him very much. He and his family would have to borrow about twenty-five thousand dollars a year—more than his mother's annual income.

"Impossible," Kelly-Carney said.

"Don't worry," Rousseau's mother said. "If I have to go corner to corner, church to church, you will be going to college in September." As she and his father took out big loans from the New York State college-financing agency, Rousseau lined up a summer job helping at-risk kids in his new neighborhood. At three hundred dollars a week, it would do little to change the economic equation. But he had done all the worrying about the future that a boy in his last days of high school could bear. How miserable could he be, anyway? He was taking Sarabina to the prom.

One June morning, the U.P.S. man delivered two brown boxes to the administration office at Pacific Rim. They contained the caps and gowns that the seniors eagerly awaited, but it took hours for the faculty to notice. In the public high schools near Pacific Rim, over a quarter of the children had dropped out before graduation; across the state, dropout rates among seniors were higher than they had been in the nineteen-nineties. At Pacific Rim, every senior had finished. One developmentally delayed boy would go to a respected non-degree program at a local four-year college, where he hoped to study early-childhood development; the troubled long-distance runner would attend community college in hopes of becoming a personal trainer. Each of the remaining twenty-two had been accepted to a four-year college. Later, Blasdale and his teachers told one another, they would bask. But three hundred other futures required immediate attention.

The class of 2005 was a larger, harder group, and nine teachers—a third of the faculty—were leaving. They'd found jobs with bigger paychecks, more time to be parents, less emotional depletion—the usual reasons. Blasdale had reviewed three hundred résumés, interviewed dozens of people, and thought he'd found some good new teachers, but he knew that in a year he'd be searching for replacements again.

DIGISHOP
new
New
NEW
NEW
TO
W
O

In mid-June, Rousseau and the other seniors gathered on a curved stairway at Faneuil Hall, downtown. The boys leaned against Doric columns, comparing ties. The girls shifted their weight from stiletto to stiletto, mulling whether to walk in bare feet. Below them they could see the hall growing packed, people sweating and sniffling already, but the seniors were trying to delay their entrance as long as they could. It wasn't a matter of sentiment. Dwayne, that knucklehead, had yet to arrive.

"Dwayne! Where you at? We're blowing up your cell phone here!"

"Yo, Dwayne, even you aren't too cool to come to graduation. I'm going to call right back in sixty seconds—pick up!"

"Dwayne, please—they're making us turn off the cell phone, just get your butt over here now."

Two days earlier, at a dinner that the faculty gave for the seniors' families, Dwayne's mother had arrived sobbing and laden with flowers for the teachers who she believed had saved her son. Tonight, however, Dwayne's classmates went forward without him, as they would do again in September. The kids sensed already that they had lost him. The teachers sensed already the more difficult rescue effort that lay ahead. Within three weeks of graduation, he would suffer two gunshot wounds, be arrested, and plead not guilty to assault with a dangerous weapon. As freshman college orientation in New Hampshire came and went, he would be in the Suffolk County jail. "This is no place for you guys," he'd say when Rousseau and a classmate tried to visit. It was no place, Rousseau thought, for Dwayne, either.

Rousseau now came forward to give the commencement address. Standing under a portrait of Daniel Webster, with Blasdale and Weston beside him, and six hundred people in front, he felt uncannily calm. The next time life got hard—and it would get hard, he suspected—there was something he was keen to remember: that once, when challenged, he rose. ◆

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE MONEY MAN

Can George Soros's millions insure the defeat of President Bush?

BY JANE MAYER

On August 6th, a week after the Democratic Convention, a clandestine summit meeting took place at the Aspen Institute, in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. The participants, all Democrats, were sworn to secrecy, and few of them will discuss the event. One thing that is certain, however, is that the guests formed a tableau that not many people would associate with the Democratic Party of the past. Five billionaires joined half a dozen liberal leaders in a lengthy conversation about the future of progressive politics in America. The billionaires were not especially close socially, nor were they in complete agreement about politics or strategy. Yet they shared a common goal: to use their fortunes to engineer the defeat of President George W. Bush in the 2004 election.

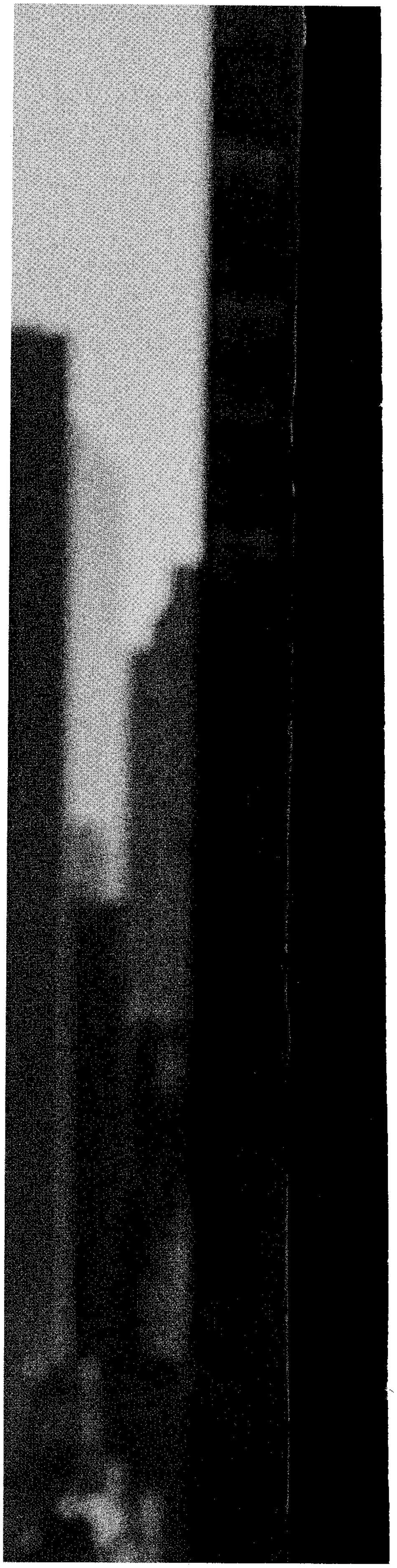
"No one was supposed to know about this," an assistant to one participant told me, declining to be named. "We don't want people thinking it's a cabal, or some sort of Masonic plot!" His concern was understandable: the prospect of rich men concentrating their wealth in order to sway an American election was an inflammatory one, particularly given the Democratic Party's populist rhetoric. This private meeting of plutocrats was an unintended consequence of the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance-reform law of 2002. Previously, wealthy donors had contributed "soft money" to the political parties, which controlled how the funds were spent. The reform legislation had banned such gifts, forcing donors to find new ways of influencing the political process.

The meeting's organizer was Peter B. Lewis, the seventy-year-old reclusive chairman of the Progressive Corporation, an insurance company based in Cleveland, Ohio. He has spent much of 2004 discreetly directing millions of dollars to liberal groups allied with the Democratic Party, such as America Coming Together and MoveOn.org, while cruising the Mediterranean Sea on his two-hundred-and-fifty-foot yacht, Lone Ranger. The yacht has communications equipment that allows Lewis to monitor political developments in America while sunbathing off the coast of Italy. Lewis, a major backer of efforts to decriminalize marijuana, has helped underwrite campaigns to hold referenda on decriminalization in Arizona and California. (In 2000, he was arrested in New Zealand for possessing marijuana.) According to Lewis's friends, he concluded that it would be best to remain a shadow figure in the 2004 campaign; he has declined all requests for interviews.

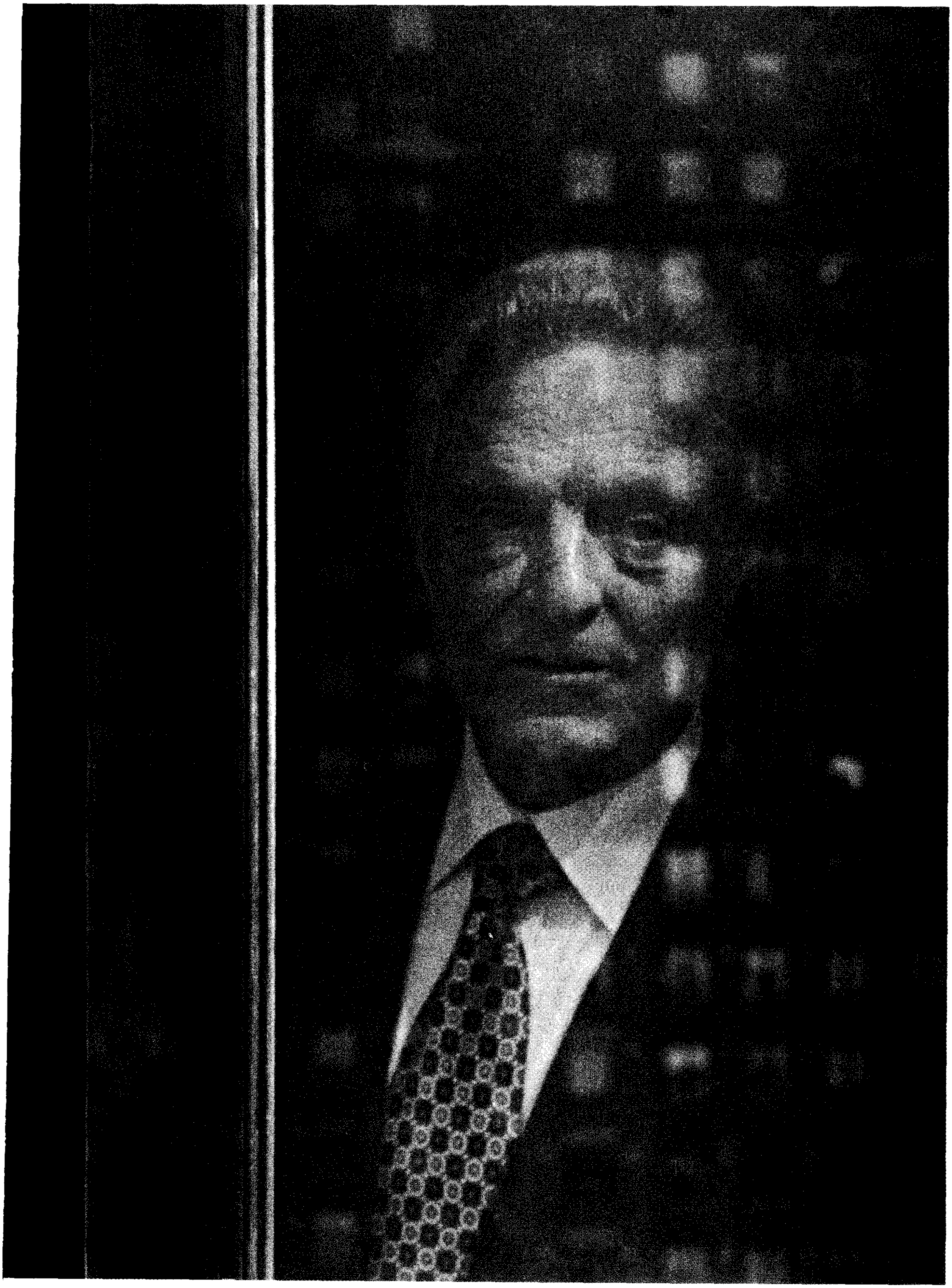
Flying in from Arizona was John Sperling, an octogenarian businessman who in 1976 created the for-profit University of Phoenix. Sperling is also the co-author of a recent book, "The Great Divide: Retro vs. Metro America," which suggests that the 2004 election is a contest between " 'God, Family, and Flag' folks"—who live in the South, the Great Plains, the Rockies, and Appalachia—and forward-thinking metropolitans who support "economic modernity," "religious moderation," and "excellence in education and science."

Herb and Marion Sandler, a California couple in their seventies, came to Aspen looking for ways to give back to a country that had allowed them to prosper. The founders of Golden West Financial Corporation, a savings-and-loan company worth seventeen billion dollars, the Sandlers are devoted to the idea of preserving progressive income taxes and inheritance taxes.

The wealthiest participant at this meeting of hard-core partisans—and the one whose presence was the most surprising—was George Soros, the seventy-four-year-old Wall Street speculator turned philanthropist. Soros, who was born in Budapest in 1930, is short, with a crest of gray hair, owlish glasses surrounding blue eyes, and a hearing aid in one ear. At Aspen, his deep Hungarian accent, and his taste for abstract ideas, made him seem like a European professor who had walked into the



Soros was a leading crusader for campaig



MAGNUM

nance reform, but, he says, "These aren't normal times. The ends justify every legal means possible." Photograph by Eugene Richards.

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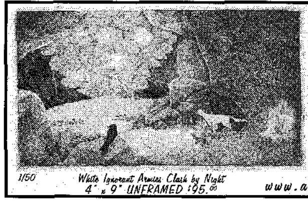
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wrong seminar. "The participants kind of talked past each other," a person who attended the meeting told me.

To the distress of some of the strategists present, the billionaires spent much of the time bemoaning the superior powers of the G.O.P. In exasperation, one participant, Harold Ickes, Bill Clinton's former deputy chief of staff, attempted to rally the group with a look back at liberalism's legacy of achievement, from the civil-rights era to the feminist movement. Much remained to be accomplished, he suggested.

Sperling proposed a potential new project for the group: unionizing Wal-Mart workers. Soros, however, had no interest in union drives. He wanted to stay focussed on the main objective—ousting Bush. Yet he also warned the group against the idea of combatting right-wing propaganda with leftist demagoguery. "I do not have an interest in replacing one extremist movement with another," he said.

Andrew Stern, the president of the Service Employees International Union, a holdover from the traditional working-class base of the Democratic Party, was also at the summit. In an interview not long ago, he conceded that consorting with billionaires had become a strange but increasingly common part of his job. "I have to admit, I used to think I was doing well when I met millionaires," he said. "I'm glad we've got the billionaires with us. But it did feel a bit odd."

George Soros immigrated to America from London in 1956, then went on to launch the Quantum Fund, one of the world's first private hedge funds. For the past two decades, he has been among the wealthiest men in the world. *Forbes* currently ranks him as America's twenty-fourth-richest person, and estimates his fortune to be $7.2 billion. Soros's Wall Street background makes him a relatively rare figure in the world of Democratic donors. Hollywood liberals and trial lawyers have long made large contributions to liberal causes, but financiers are less often associated with a desire to upend the status quo. Soros himself is new to campaign politics: this is his first large-scale involvement in an American Presidential election.

Equally surprising is Soros's willingness to join forces with other liberals—he has always been a loner, an independent, restless, and eccentric thinker who is determined not to be stuck in a fixed position for long. The Quantum fund, a pool for hugely wealthy investors that profited by anticipating and exploiting price swings in foreign currencies, is famously iconoclastic. Soros recently passed much of the fund's management to his two grown sons, Robert and Jonathan, but under his direction it rejected the prevailing orthodoxy about the rationality of the market in favor of the notion that markets were prone to chaos and distortions stemming from human error. The fund, which is registered in the Netherlands Antilles, turned an original investment of six million dollars, in 1969, into five and a half billion dollars by 1999.

Soros's political history is unorthodox as well. When he first arrived in America, a friend of his told me, Soros was hardly an enemy of conservative politicians. He had seen Hungary crushed by the Soviet bloc, and his political thinking was shaped primarily by his bitterness toward Communism. He held Ronald Reagan in high regard for his contributions toward breaking up the Soviet empire.

In the nineteen-eighties, Soros became a major philanthropist. In 1993, he created the Open Society Institute, a New York-based foundation that has supported intellectual freedom, human rights, and civil liberties in oppressive regimes around the world. Soros's philanthropy is animated by a central idea: that the free expression of critical thought, such as he has practiced in his financial career, is the wellspring of democracy, or an "open society." Soros has financed every kind of project imaginable in promoting this goal, from supporting dissidents such as Václav Havel, of the Czech Republic, to providing water-filtration systems for city residents during the siege of Sarajevo. Since he began his philanthropic efforts, Soros has given away more than four billion dollars—an amount that places him in the ranks of Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

On September 11, 2001, Soros was in Beijing; he watched the Twin Towers fall on television. "It touched me," he said in one of several recent interviews. But he soon began to feel that the country was "heading way off the rails." The statements of Attorney General John Ashcroft, he said, "reminded me of Germany, under the Nazis. It was the kind of talk that Goebbels used to use to line the Germans up. I remember, I was thirteen or fourteen. It was the same kind of propaganda about how 'We are endangered' and 'We have to be united.' ”

Soros supported the military strikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan, but, after the passage of the U.S.A. Patriot Act and the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq in a preëmptive strike, he came to believe that the American government was itself becoming an oppressive regime. “I decided the most important thing I could do to foster global open societies was to get Bush out of the White House,” he told me.

America, as Soros sees it, is poised at a dangerous intersection. The Bush Administration, he said, has exploited the terrorist threat to consolidate its own power, in ways that threaten the country's core democratic values. “Ancient Rome was a great democracy, too, but it turned into an empire,” he said. “Caesar crossed the Rubicon. We may be at the Rubicon. Terrorism, like the barbarians at the gate, may become a permanent threat that never disappears. If we always have to rely on troops to protect us from the terrorists, and we can never criticize the Commander-in-Chief without undercutting the troops, then that's the end of our open society.”

According to Soros, the war in Iraq attempted to spread democracy in precisely the wrong way—at gunpoint. “Democracy can only be built if local forces are eager to see it established,” he said. More broadly, he feared that the detention of terrorist suspects in Guantánamo Bay, and the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, would undermine America's ability to champion human rights. (Soros suggested that the Bush Administration's meek reaction to Vladimir Putin's recent retreat from democracy in Russia was a consequence of our compromised credibility.) Soros's increasingly strident opinions, he admitted, “put me at odds, somewhat, with the general public. But I didn't worry. I am old! I don't have much to lose. It's a luxury, a reward for having been successful, that I can now risk that success.”

In May, 2003, Bush had what seemed like intimidatingly high popularity ratings, and there was overwhelming public support for the war. But Soros had one of his anticipatory hunches that the President's support was a bubble that could burst. Moreover, he had the ego and the audacity to think that he could pop it. He commissioned two political researchers, Mark Steitz and Tom Novick, to determine whether it would be possible for Soros himself to exert political impact.

The following July, Soros invited a group of top Democratic activists to join him in the salmon-colored drawing room at El Mirador, his weekend estate in Southampton, Long Island, for the presentation of the consultants' report. Steitz and Novick indicated that the 2004 election would probably be very close. The electorate was polarized, with only ten per cent of likely voters undecided. The best strategy, they said, would be to mobilize the Democratic base and persuade undecided voters with a state-of-the-art field operation. The plan was projected to cost at least seventy-five million dollars. As the researchers gave their presentation, Steitz recalled, “Soros was very engrossed. He leaned forward when we were talking about getting out the vote, and asked, 'You mean you actually go door to door?' All the practical aspects caught his imagination.”

Under the new campaign-finance law, supporters could no longer give unlimited funds directly to the Democratic Party—but according to the consultants' interpretation of the law they could funnel private contributions into allied “independent” groups. As the discussion proceeded, it was proposed that Soros provide enough funds to these groups to pay for field operations in six or seven of the seventeen states that were expected to be the most contested. Soros, Steitz recalled, insisted that funds be offered for all seventeen. “He said, 'I don't want to build half a bridge! I want to do what's necessary to effect the outcome!' ”

When I asked Soros why he hadn't just written a check for the whole seventy-five million, he said, “I thought ten would do.” Peter Lewis had agreed to match

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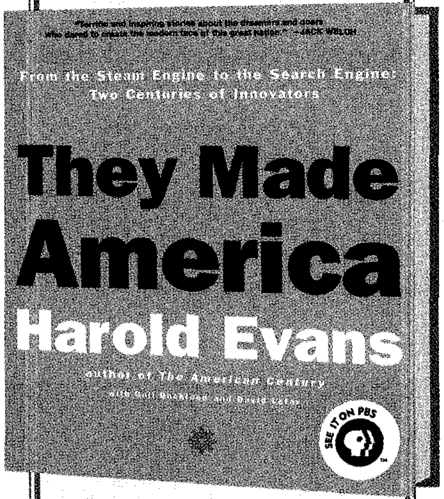

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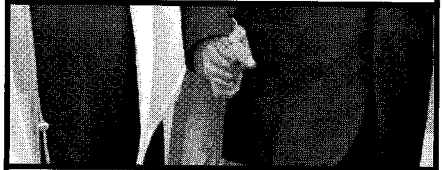

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HOPEFULS

The notion was that there should be one hundred
hopefuls and one winner.

But of course ten thousand showed up at the first
slash of the first shutter.

And they wound around the town as if each second
of a lost child's last hours

had come to life. When the perfect face was spotted
the game was packed away:

relief all round, the news sent back like current
down the line, and the chosen

helicoptered out of it, the smoke
advancing, the roads empty.

—*Glyn Maxwell*

each donation—and, Soros hoped, their example would get others to join in. "They were doing what rich old guys should do when they think things have gone awry," Peter Lewis's son, Jonathan, told me. "They're like a married couple," he said of the two men. "If they have differences of opinion, they work it out."

David Magleby, a dean at Brigham Young University, who studies politics and money, said that Soros's decision had a catalytic effect. "He made himself highly visible in a way that was surprising," Magleby said. "He became a lightning rod. It was a conscious decision to energize the Democrats. And Soros was right. Soros launched a counterattack that surprised the Republicans, and probably even the Democrats. The money was particularly important because it was so early. It's investment banking applied to politics."

In concert with Peter Lewis, Soros made large donations to ostensibly independent groups such as America Coming Together and the Young Voter Alliance. By this October, Soros had become one of the largest political-campaign contributors in American history, having spent an estimated eighteen and a half million dollars to defeat Bush.

Critics of Soros see his donations as brazenly hypocritical, considering that, until recently, he was a leading crusader for campaign-finance reform in America. Starting in the late nineteen-nineties, he donated eighteen million dollars to groups that supported the cause, and he is credited with having contributed significantly to the passage of the McCain-Feingold law. When Soros was asked about this reversal, he said, "This is the most important election of my lifetime. These aren't normal times. The ends justify every legal means possible."

For someone as rich as Soros, eighteen and half a million dollars is almost a negligible amount of money. I recently asked him if he even felt it when he gave away nearly twenty million dollars to the Democrats. He shook his head and shrugged no. He noted that he typically gives away more than four hundred million dollars a year.

Considering that over-all spending in the 2004 campaign may well surpass a billion dollars, Soros's contribution is clearly too small to be determinative. Nonetheless, it is large enough to have made him a favorite target of conservative critics. Earlier this year, the Bush campaign, eager to deflect charges that the G.O.P. is the party of the rich, made a lengthy anti-Soros dossier available to any reporter willing not to disclose the sourcing. The *Wall Street Journal* ran a mocking editorial describing Soros as "the new Daddy Warbucks of the Democratic

Party." Bill O'Reilly, the Fox News talk-show host, has devoted several shows to Soros, characterizing him as a "sleazoid" and a "far-left radical bomb-thrower." In an interview on Fox, Newt Gingrich, the former Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, falsely accused Soros of wanting "to spend seventy-five million dollars" in the current campaign—almost quadrupling the true sum. Soros, who had long been considered emotionally aloof, was only spurred on by such attacks. "I've never seen him so partisan," Robert Boorstin, an executive at the Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank, said.

Originally, Soros had planned to keep quiet about his personal political agenda until after the election. Late this summer, he jettisoned this strategy in favor of waging his own media-grabbing political campaign. He hired a publicist for a twelve-city, three-million-dollar speaking tour. He sponsored a two-page ad containing a lengthy summary of his views in the *Wall Street Journal*, and set up a blog on which he promised to answer strangers' e-mails.

Soros also asked his publisher, Public Affairs, to print an additional fifty thousand paperback copies of his recent book, "The Bubble of American Supremacy," a polemic against what Soros saw as the Bush Administration's doomed efforts to force other nations into military and economic submission. Though the book attacked the President's actions, Soros's decision to go on tour was also a slap at Bush's opponent, John Kerry. In early October, Soros told me, "I feel that Kerry hasn't gone far enough about Iraq." What had the candidate failed to say? "We need to convince the people of Iraq that we're going to leave," Soros said. Hadn't Kerry said precisely that, during his first debate with Bush? "Yes, well, he did, but we have to make clear under what conditions we'll leave, and what we'll leave behind. We have to put in place systems for allocating the oil revenues."

As Soros has toured the country, he has transformed himself from a lordly patron of powerless political dissidents into a dissident himself. He has not heard a word from the Kerry campaign about his efforts. "The professionals have told me not to get mad but to get even," he said. Some fellow-activists on the Democratic side, such as Wes Boyd, the founder of MoveOn.org, had cautioned him about becoming a distraction in the campaign. Privately, some Democratic officials were more scathing. One worried that the Party's top funder was getting "kooky," and said, "He should shut up!" Another suggested acidly, "Why doesn't he just run for President himself?" Soros, his critics said, seemed about to become the Democratic Party's answer to the conservative movement's largest bankroller—the reclusive Richard Mellon Scaife.

"I hope I am more open, and more public-spirited," Soros said of the Scaife comparison. "But I recognize that what I've done has raised eyebrows, not just among the right wing but with ordinary people, too." Soros's fervor has sparked some ridicule even within his own family. According to a family friend, George's brother, Paul, a global investor who lives in Connecticut, once joked of his sibling, "He was perfectly normal until he made his first hundred million."

Richard Medley, a former partner at Soros's hedge fund, was more sympathetic. "It's much deeper for him, in terms of his personal life, than most people realize," he said, adding that Bush "poses a massive threat" to everything that Soros values. The President's resistance to contemplating his own errors, for instance, was anathema to Soros, who regards self-criticism as the beginning of wisdom. "George is a creature of the Enlightenment," Medley said. "He believes in rationality, science, the discoverable truth, and in relentless honesty. He's not a fundamentalist about markets or anything else. The problem for him is that Bush is kind of the first anti-Enlightenment President we've had."

In our conversations, Soros argued that for eighteen months after September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration had managed to "suspend the critical process" and "suppress all dissent" by labelling any criticism unpatriotic. It's an argument that not every Bush critic accepts. "I disagree with him," Michael Kazin, a progressive American historian at Georgetown University, said. "In the days after 9/11, the overwhelming majority of Americans obviously backed Bush's tough stand against terrorism and the invasion of Afghanistan. He didn't need to 'silence' them. And a small but vocal minority—Noam Chomsky, Katha Pollitt, Tariq Ali—were quite capable of making their views known." Since 2003, Soros acknowledges, dissent has become more widespread, and

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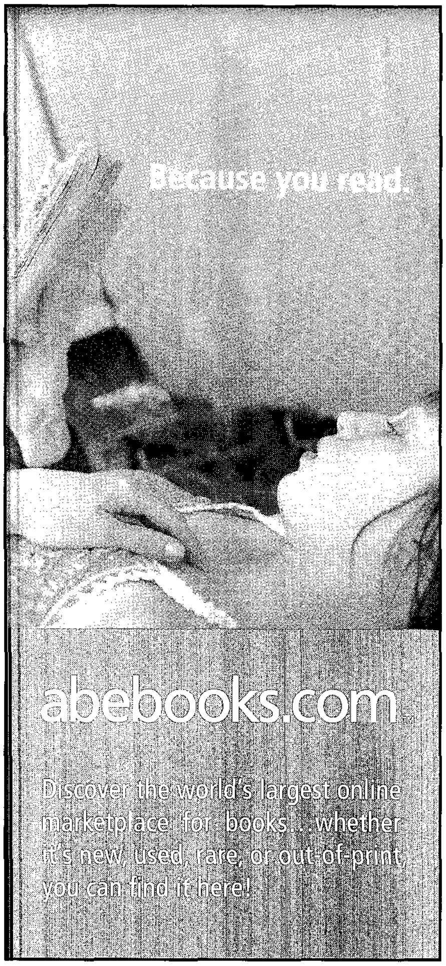
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the best-seller lists are filled with anti-Bush books. Still, he pointed out, Bush recently tried to stigmatize dissent by claiming that Kerry's critique of the war in Iraq could "embolden an enemy"; Vice-President Dick Cheney, he noted, went even further, by proclaiming that a vote for Kerry could invite another attack.

One of Soros's former associates, whose political views are more conservative, and who asked not to be identified, suggested that the financier, encouraged by like-minded liberals in New York, was mired in the same kind of fallacious group thinking that he had seized upon during his hedge-fund days. "He's lost his bearings," she argued. "How can he credibly compare America to a police state?"

At El Mirador on a sparkling day in late summer, Soros spoke darkly about the future. "I find it really difficult to conceive of a Bush victory," he said. "It would be so detrimental to the world, to the U.S., and to me personally."

It was hard to feel too worried in those surroundings. We sat on the brick patio of a Mediterranean-style pavilion; the velvety green lawns were dotted with magnificent specimen trees, meticulously tended flower beds, and lily ponds. El Mirador is known for being occupied by mismatched house guests, who spend summer weekends dipping into the pool and playing chess in the drawing room, amid upholstered wicker chaises and Cubist paintings. The poet Allen Ginsberg used to visit El Mirador; on the day I visited, Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, was due to arrive soon. Soros's social set also includes the rock star Bono and the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

For now, however, El Mirador felt empty. The compound was surrounded by tall white plastered walls, and monitored by a security system. The only immediately visible threat was the presence of a man swinging lethargically in a distant hammock. "Is he with you?" Soros asked, a little nervously, as the man got up and began to approach, apparently intent on joining our alfresco meal. Only when the man came within ten feet or so did Soros recognize him—he was the local tennis pro, and he had come to play a game with Soros, who is a fiercely competitive player, on the wrong day.

Considering the hatred that Soros's activism has aroused, worries about security were no joke. He has received physical threats, prompting Soros's firm to hire an armed security guard. "They've turned me into some kind of a devil, a golem!" he said. Vicious and sometimes anti-Semitic smears—Soros was born into a Jewish family—have appeared on the Internet. One screed, entitled "Satan Lives in George Soros," compared him to Shylock and said that "Jews rule the world by proxy."

Some of these wild attacks came from people not associated with the lunatic fringe. In August, Dennis Hastert, the Republican Speaker of the House, gave an interview on Fox News in which he insinuated that Soros, who, like Lewis, favors the decriminalization of marijuana, was funded by "drug groups"—a falsehood that the Speaker could not substantiate. When he was challenged by the show's startled host to explain his charge, Hastert compounded the smear by saying, "The fact is, we don't know where this money comes from." (Hastert's press secretary, John Feehery, declined to set up an interview for Hastert to comment.) The Speaker's insinuation that Soros was tied to the illegal-narcotics trade was soon echoed on the state-run television news in Kazakhstan, where the Open Society Institute has been working to fight corruption.

"I asked for it," Soros said, with a wry smile. The Hastert attack reminded him of politically orchestrated smears that had been made against him in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. During the nineteen-nineties, Soros spent an estimated billion dollars in Russia; he became a hero and benefactor to countless civic and cultural institutions, funding everything from literary journals to democracy-building groups. Masha Lipman, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, said that members of the Russian media had accused Soros of "basically being a spy." The nationalist newspaper *Zavtra* called him "an enemy of humanity" whose "checks are infected," and whose "gendarmes are local Jews." Lipman added, "The allegation was that he couldn't possibly be doing this out of philanthropy—he must have had an evil design." Hard-line Communists and nationalists accused Soros of trying to influence the course of Russian history in order to benefit himself financially. And when the ruble collapsed, in the summer of 1998—a catastrophic moment in the attempt to rebuild the economy—Soros

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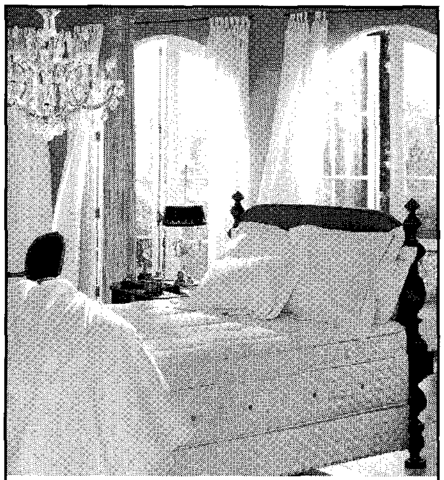

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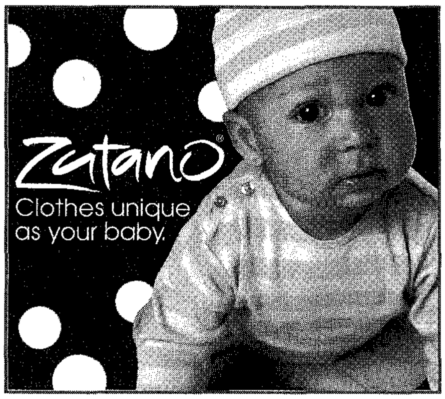

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was blamed as a main source of Russia's problems. Lipman said, "It's not that Soros didn't do the right thing. Russia's legacy simply proved too strong for anyone to push it on a sustainable democratic path."

More recently, Soros endured similar attacks in Ukraine. He recalled, "The government sent out messages about me, telling the media what to say. It's the same with the Republican National Committee and Fox. They denigrate me personally in order to avoid the substance of my ideas."

Yet Soros's analysis of the Bush White House did not always rise above the personal. He dismissed the President as an ignorant fool. "Bush was just chosen as a figurehead, an acceptable face for a sinister group," he said, adding, "Cheney is the Capo." Pressed on how so much of the country could support Bush and Cheney, given his dismissive assessment, Soros cited the German scholar Erich Fromm's landmark study of totalitarianism, "Escape from Freedom," suggesting, "In uncertain times, people want to escape to safety. They seek a father figure, who acts with conviction." He added, "Bush does have conviction. He practically claims a link to God."

Soros, who describes himself as an agnostic, contended that Bush's religious beliefs are in conflict with America's democratic traditions. "The separation of church and state, the bedrock of our democracy, is clearly undermined by having a born-again President," he said. "Our concern about Islamic fundamentalism is that there's no separation between church and state, yet we are about to erode that here." He lamented that, in the current climate, most American politicians could not risk making such politically incorrect statements. "You can see it, but you can't say it," he said.

During our lunch, a spare, low-carb entrée of grilled swordfish on sautéed greens served by a young man in a white polo shirt with the name of the estate emblazoned on the pocket, Soros was so engrossed in his thoughts that he ate absent-mindedly. A crew of gardeners mowed the large, empty lawn.

In our conversation, Soros tiptoed around his personal feelings for John Kerry, although he has known him socially for a number of years. Throughout the campaign, Soros has maintained a careful distance from Kerry, since the independent political groups he had funded are legally required not to coördinate their activities with the candidate. But both Soros and Kerry own houses in Sun Valley, Idaho, and they spent an afternoon in December, 2001, together, discussing Kerry's ambition to run for President. At the time, Kerry was preparing a major foreign-policy statement. "I helped him with it," Soros told me. Yet Soros's description of Kerry as "very acceptable"—the same ranking that he gave to Howard Dean and Wesley Clark—had all the warmth of a corporate personnel office. "I would have backed any of them over Bush," he said.

Soros seemed rather isolated in his political adventure. Although he often chatted with Peter Lewis, Soros said that there was no Brain Trust advising him of political developments. He talked from time to time with Bill Moyers and with Harold Ickes, whom he described as "a real pro." But, he said, "I am a political neophyte. I get most of my information from the newspapers." Democratic partisans, he said, "send me books of polls, but, frankly, they're not of much interest. I don't read them." He hadn't attended the Democratic Convention, and he had decided to stay away from a large fund-raising event held the night before at a nearby beach house, even though Kerry had attended. He made no pretense of being a Washington insider. During one conversation, he mistakenly assumed that the conservative columnist David Brooks, of the *Times*, and the anti-conservative activist David Brock were the same person.

"This is not my strength," he confessed. "I'm eager to get out of this partisan position that I'm pigeonholed into. I heartily dislike it." He added, "I've always been against dividing the world into 'us' versus 'them.' So this 'us'-versus-'them' campaign is very uncomfortable for me."

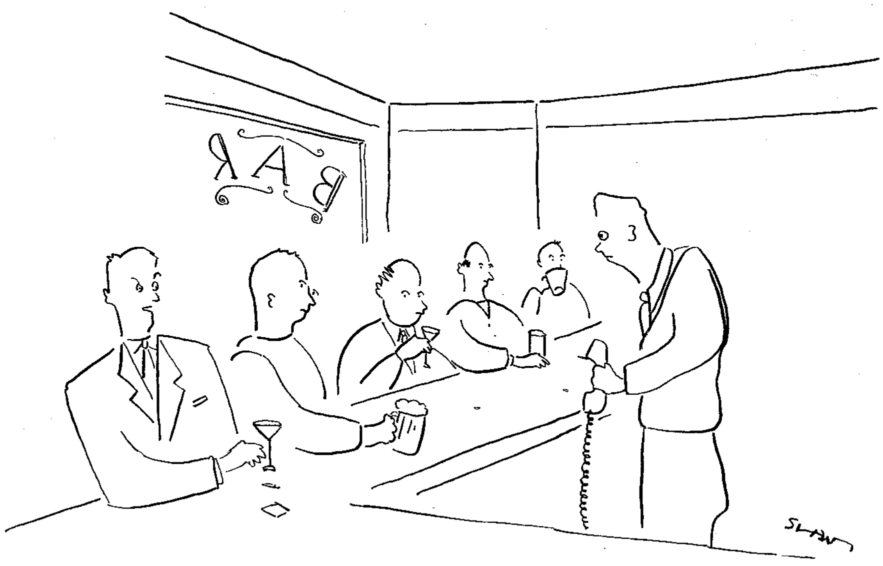
Soros expressed so many reservations about partisan politics that it was almost difficult to understand why he had got so enmeshed. The Republicans had explained Soros's involvement with simple-minded shorthand, suggesting that he wanted to own the White House. But Soros's buying habits, like nearly everything else about him, were complicated. El Mirador, for instance, was large and elegant, but it wasn't perched on the beach, and it barely had a view of the Atlantic Ocean. Soros was said to be a man of relatively modest tastes, given the possibilities. "I'm not very materialistic," he said. "I don't really have a talent for shopping." He has tried. An admirer of modern art and, in particular, of the delicate abstractions of Paul Klee, Soros once found a dealer who sold him a miniature Klee canvas, on approval. But, as it hung on his wall, Soros told me, "I couldn't really see it anymore. All I saw was the forty-thousand-dollar check I had written. I couldn't enjoy it. So I returned it."

Soros spent years in therapy, and was undoubtedly familiar with psychoanalytic theories that the wealthy bought art as a means of assuaging their guilt, by transforming filthy lucre into objects of beauty. But he didn't seem particularly afflicted with this neurosis. He said, "I'm not one of those rich people who pretend they're not rich, or try to live that way. I just happen to have a more abstract bent." A friend who asked not to be identified said that Soros was so uninterested in money that he often travelled with an empty wallet, forcing friends to loan him cash for cab fare, which he invariably forgot to pay back. Women, the friend said, flocked to him, "because they expect him to leave hundred-dollar bills in their pocketbooks. But he never does." Soros's second wife, Susan, from whom he is separated, sumptuously decorated the couple's Fifth Avenue apartment and an estate in Bedford, New York. But Soros spoke with indifference of the Sargent and Whistler paintings they owned.

"Money is just a tool for him," the friend said. "It's how he manipulates a lot of things in his life." Indeed, when I asked Soros to name one thing in the world that he wished he could have, he replied with a laugh, "If I want it, I own it." He paused. "But I do want something," Soros finally said, his smile fading. "I want my ideas to be heard."

Soros explained that he had been trying to influence American policy since 1989. "On my own, I was trying to do things, but if I could influence American policy I could be much more effective," he said. Soros said that he tries to maintain a strict separation between his financial and his philanthropic work. Yet he acknowledged, "There are occasionally symbiotic moments between political and business interests." He cited one example: an attempt to set up a public-policy think tank in England which had at first looked like a fruitless venture; it had landed him in what promised to be one of the most boring conferences of his life. But, chatting with British notables, he caught a serendipitous glimpse of a way to break into the closed world of the British bond market, which he soon did. It became "one of the most rewarding weekends of my life," he said. "I made many millions."

A number of Soros's previous efforts to influence American policy had been frustrated. After the Berlin Wall fell, he met with the Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, in an attempt to get the first Bush Administration to provide more support for Mikhail Gorbachev, whose reform instincts Soros took more seriously than the Administration did. "They told me that we can never help Russia so long as it is allied with Cuba," he recalled. In the mid-nineties, Soros had also tried, with



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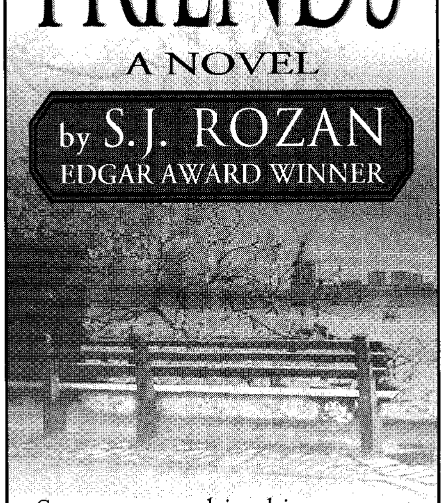

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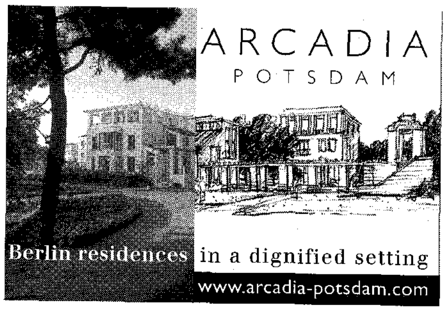

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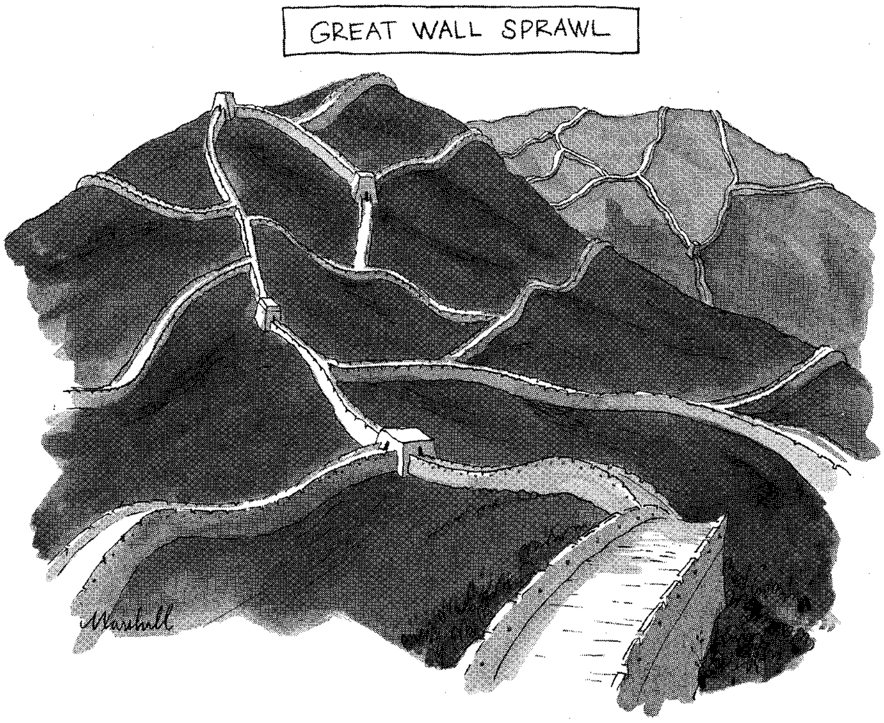

mixed success, to influence the foreign policy of the Clinton Administration, in favor of intervening against Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia. After donating fifty million dollars to the relief effort in Bosnia, and a hundred thousand dollars to Clinton's reëlection effort, Soros expected a warm welcome. But Clinton's chief of staff, Thomas (Mack) McLarty, kept him waiting for so long in his empty office, Soros said, that he walked out. Aides ran after him, telling him that the President wanted to see him. But, Soros said, Clinton seemed less interested in Soros's thoughts on Yugoslavia than in the stock market. "He just wanted to please me as a donor," Soros said, sighing. "It happens a lot."

During the fight over Yugoslavia, Soros developed an amiable rapport with Paul Wolfowitz, who shared his view on the necessity of intervening. Wolfowitz, who was then the dean of Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, invited Soros to deliver an address on his theories of open societies. When Wolfowitz later became the Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Bush Administration, and emerged as a key figure arguing for the invasion of Iraq, Soros told me that he had proposed to debate Wolfowitz publicly. "I got no reply," he said. Soros clearly hopes that a Kerry White House would be more receptive to his views. "I put my money where my mouth is," he said.

To his disappointment, however, his money often seemed to attract more admiration than his ideas did. He was humiliated in 1988 when foreign-policy dignitaries in Germany openly laughed at a speech he made advocating extensive aid for Eastern European countries. Although his most recent book received respectful reviews, a polemic that he wrote in 1998, "The Crisis of Global Capitalism," which predicted imminent global economic collapse, was not only wrong—it was ridiculed as the work of a dilettante. In *The New Republic,* Robert Solow, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, dismissed Soros's book as "embarrassingly banal"; the review was titled "The Amateur."

George Soros was born George Schwartz, the second son of a well-to-do, nonobservant Jewish family. His bourgeois father, Tivadar, who loomed large in Soros's young life, was a lawyer and a charmer in Budapest. Tivadar, an urbane freethinker, was philosophically opposed to the idea of working too hard; raising his two sons became his main project. Soros's mother, Erzebet, whom Tivadar married in 1924, came from a family that owned a thriving silk shop, where the fashionable ordered their clothes. According to an authoritative 2002 biography by Michael T. Kaufman, "Soros: The Life and Times of a Messianic Billionaire," Soros's father had survived Siberian imprisonment during the First World War and emerged with a keen eye for human folly, a sensibility that he passed on to his sons.

The war had left the elder Soros skeptical about nationalism and all forms of sectarianism. He became an ardent internationalist, learning Esperanto and changing the family's surname to the Esperanto-inspired palindrome "Soros." He told his sons, "Money is a means to an end, but not to be taken that seriously." More important, he taught them that while quaint ideals of heroism and the rule of law were admirable in normal times, there were moments, such as during war, when society was so traumatized—so "far from equilibrium," as George Soros later put it—that survival required that ordinary conventions be suspended.

Soros did poorly in the strictly conformist schools he attended. Nonetheless, he confessed to his biographer that "I always considered myself exceptional." He has even admitted that, at times, his self-regard bordered on "God-like."

As an adolescent during the Second World War, Soros had a chance to test his father's precepts. Critics of Soros, who include a number of Jews angered by his religious indifference and by his aversion to donating money to Israel, note with distaste that he once described 1944—the year that Adolf Eichmann directed the Nazis to deport half a million Hungarian Jews to death camps—as "the happiest year of my life." According to his biographer, Soros's comment referred to his excitement that his father had acted as a hero that year, saving the members of his immediate family by supplying them with false identity papers. Soros's father helped rescue many other Jews, too, but while he devised false documentation for his family and friends for free, he evidently profited from selling such papers to others.

I asked Soros about this in September, while travelling with him on a private Hawker-800 jet that he had chartered for a trip to deliver a speech in Chicago. Reclining in a beige leather club chair, Soros told me, "I was lucky to have a father who understood that this was not normalcy, and if you go by the normal rules you are going to die. Many Jews did not take evasive action. My family did. What I learned during the war is that sometimes you can lose everything, even your life, by not taking risks."

Risk-taking, in the form of huge and often highly leveraged bets, had been a major factor in his financial success. (These gambles, he admitted, had at times made him so dizzy from the stress that he could barely walk.) Now, he said, he felt impelled to risk his reputation in the Presidential campaign, because he thought that inaction was more dangerous. "The people in the Weimar Republic also thought everything would stay the same," he said, gazing out the plane's windows. "They didn't think those things could happen. But I have a particular sensitivity to these matters, because I lived under both Nazi and Communist occupation."

In truth, Soros did not live long under Communism. In 1947, when he was seventeen, his father arranged false identity papers for him, so that he could emigrate to London. His family, by then, had lost most of its fortune, and Soros was relegated to living in rooming houses, scrounging together money for his education by working as a busboy and a railroad porter. As a friendless foreigner in a clubby society, he resorted to standing at Speakers' Corner, in Hyde Park, and holding forth about the importance of internationalism—in Esperanto, no less.

After several attempts, Soros was accepted to the London School of Economics, where he studied under the eminent political philosopher Sir Karl Popper, the author of "The Open Society and Its Enemies" (1945). Popper's theories have taken on an iconic meaning for Soros, despite his dogma against dogma. Popper's ideas helped Soros make sense of Fascism and Communism. These two seemingly opposed ideologies, Popper argued, were actually quite alike, for they both falsely claimed absolute truth—which, he held, was unattainable. Popper championed the idea of a society defined by rational debate, where false ideas would lose out to stronger ones.

Soros dreamed of becoming a philosopher, but he got scant encouragement. Frustrated by an unsuccessful effort to write a philosophical treatise in his spare time—he abandoned it one morning after being unable to comprehend what he had written the night before—Soros instead applied his own abstruse interpretation of Popper's thinking to the world of finance, emphasizing what he called "reflexivity," or

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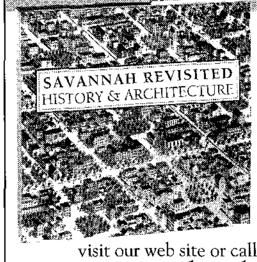

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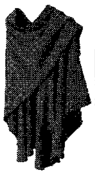

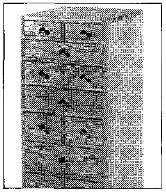
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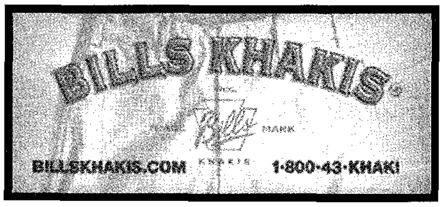

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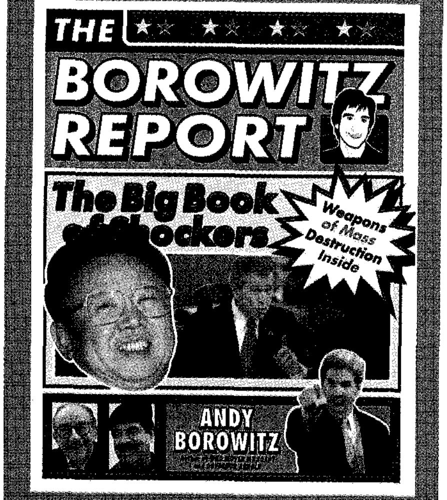

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the interplay of investors' assumptions in the markets. Others who have analyzed Soros's success have pointed to less rational explanations for it. Soros's son Robert has joked that his father simply buys when he's feeling good, and sells when his back hurts. Stanley Druckenmiller, his former partner at Quantum, was even more blunt. "The ugly way to describe it would be 'balls,'" he told Soros's biographer.

By the time Soros was fifty, he had exceeded his most extravagant financial goals, but he was miserable, for he felt his life lacked a greater "meaning." He decided to set up a foundation devoted to promoting Popper's ideal of open societies. It didn't hurt that a provision in the American tax code offered a significant tax incentive to individuals who formed "charitable lead trusts." During our lunch, Soros beamed when he told me that, upon launching his foundation, he had exploited this provision to pass on to his heirs hundreds of millions of dollars—and, in the process, saved untold millions in taxes.

The astonishing amount of cash that Soros has poured into the Presidential race is nonetheless dwarfed by Republican efforts to influence public policy through private donations. Perhaps the best perspective has been provided by Rob Stein, a Democratic strategist based in Washington. After the 2002 election, the G.O.P. controlled the Presidency, both houses of Congress, and most state legislatures; Stein worried that the country was in danger of succumbing to one-party rule. In an effort to figure out how the Republicans had emerged so victorious, he spent months studying the public tax records of right-wing nonprofit groups. He then put together a PowerPoint presentation that, in certain Democratic circles, has taken on the aura of the Rosetta stone. It showed that, since the nineteen-seventies, wealthy conservative backers had poured between two and a half billion to three billion dollars into financing a war of ideas to tilt mainstream thinking in America rightward.

Stein identified nine hugely wealthy families who had anchored the effort, all of whom were sustained by corporate fortunes; the list included the Olins, the Bradleys, the Coorses, the Kochs, the Smith-Richardsons, and the Mellon Scaifes. Between 1985 and 2001, the nine families had collectively given half a billion dollars to charitable foundations promoting policies that were in their immediate self-interest, such as lowering income taxes and deregulating industry. Scaife's foundations have reportedly spent at least three hundred and forty million dollars supporting the conservative cause. Money from conservative donors hasn't simply gone to Republican campaigns; it has been dispersed more broadly, to a startlingly effective array of institutions that market the conservative message to the average American. Stein told me that such groups, which he called a "conservative message machine," had a budget of four hundred million dollars in 2002 alone. "There is not an analogous capacity on the Democratic side," Stein said. In fact, he said, the right wing had turned this machinery against Soros himself—even though Soros's campaign expenditures were a pittance by comparison. "What they're doing to him is an example of the dark side of the message machine. They will use the machinery to denigrate anyone who is competitive with them."

Unlike Soros, Scaife prefers to operate behind the scenes; he has never written an article under his own name or given a public speech. Based in Pittsburgh, where his Mellon forebears made the steel fortune that he inherited, he has been fighting liberalism much longer than Soros has been defending it. Notorious for funding the "Arkansas Project" during the Clinton years, which paid investigators to dig up dirt on the Clintons and their associates, Scaife recently invested in *NewsMax*, a magazine that features rambling, pointed investigations of Soros. One *NewsMax* cover story, "George Soros's Coup," was written by Richard Poe, a forty-five-year-old author of motivational books. In October, Poe co-wrote "The Shadow Party," another critique of Soros, for an online magazine run by the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, which receives funding from Scaife. This summer, Poe appeared on "The O'Reilly Factor" to lambaste Soros. The gist of his argument, Poe recently told me, was that Soros was "using his philanthropy to gain influence globally." What Soros wanted, Poe said, was "to get control of the Democratic Party for a relatively cheap price . . . put his own President in, and, behind the scenes, tell him what to do." He concluded that Soros was "a definite type . . . the self-hating

Jew." Another investigator into Soros's activities who indirectly receives money from Scaife—and who also appeared on O'Reilly's program this summer—is John Carlisle. He recently wrote a report for the Scaife-funded Capital Research Center, in which he claimed that Soros considered President Bush to be a greater menace than Osama bin Laden.

"I don't oppose other views, even right-wing ones," Soros told me, "because I think in an open society a variety of points of view should be heard. But, by giving this money, I was trying to level the playing field. The Republicans have so much more money, the debate had become lopsided."

Soros's outsized financial role in the election has also stirred alarm in some traditionally liberal circles. Even people who share his views on Bush worry about what sort of influence so much money might buy. Frank Mankiewicz, a former aide to George McGovern and Robert Kennedy, told me, "It's tough when you realize guys like Soros have so much money. Billions! I can't believe there's an election that can't be won for that kind of money."

Fred Wertheimer, the president of Democracy 21, an advocacy group whose stated mission is to help "eliminate the undue influence of big money in American politics," told me, "I understand how important this election is, but when George Soros puts eighteen million dollars in it's creating the image that there's a special right that the very rich have to determine the outcome of elections. Most wealthy people have interests pending in front of the government—regulatory or tax issues, or something. Even if George Soros is only looking for influence to get out of Iraq, that's not appropriate. These laws were designed to insure that influence over government decisions is not bought and sold, and that applies to areas that are economic and ideological." Wertheimer then alluded to Soros's past support for campaign-finance reform. "Soros is in an odd position," he said. (Soros donated money to Democracy 21 during his days as a campaign-finance-reform advocate.)

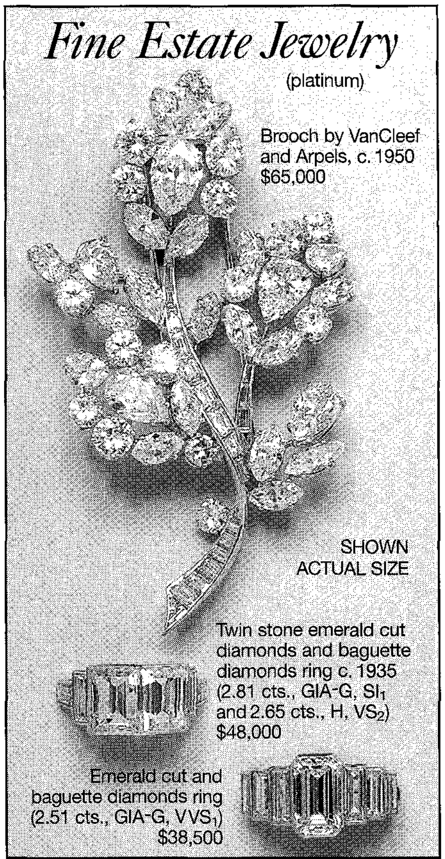
When Soros was asked about Wertheimer's comments, he said, "I am *not* a turncoat. I play by the prevailing rules, and our lawyers said that what we did this year was legally permissible." Soros acknowledged that, "after this election, there will be a need for further reform." He suggested that it was unrealistic to expect that money wouldn't find some other way into future campaigns, but he added that with more public financing there might be ways to dilute its influence. As the situation stood this year, though, Soros conceded, "I think it's unhealthy."

It won't be known until Election Day if Soros's extreme measures will pay off. Conceivably, if the election is very close, the get-out-the-vote operation he paid for could make a decisive difference. (According to a recent analysis by the *Times*, in the battleground state of Ohio voter registration in Democratic precincts is up by two hundred and fifty per cent from 2000.) But even the best delivery system in the world needs a product to sell, and in this case the product—John Kerry—is beyond Soros's control.

If Kerry wins, Soros will be in a unique position. He told me that he would not accept any offers of a government appointment. "I'm not looking for a job," he said, then joked, "I don't believe in working." But, he added, "I would be very happy to advise Kerry, if he's willing to listen to me, and to criticize him, if he isn't. I've been trying to exert some influence over our policies, and I hope I'll get a better hearing under Kerry."

Soros had already compiled a list of specific notions about how to solve the crisis in Iraq which he'd like the next President to consider. He and Leslie H. Gelb, the president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, had worked out a plan calling for summit talks on Iraq, under U.N. auspices, which would include neighboring countries. The two men envisioned that Iraq could be divided along ethnic lines into largely autonomous regions, united by a federal government that would distribute oil revenues. "It's purely an idea, but one I'd support, and advocate," Soros said. He also told me that he would push for eliminating Bush's tax cuts.

Such an outcome is a pleasing scenario for Soros to contemplate—but if the President is reëlected, he acknowledged, he may well find himself in an "uncomfortable" situation. As he put it, "After all, I regard Bush as danger. And I am sure he holds the same opinion of me." ♦



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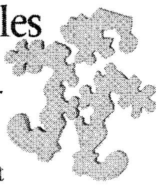

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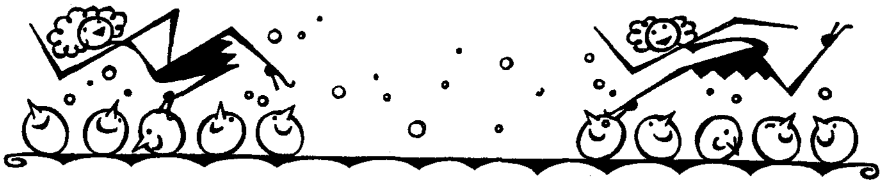
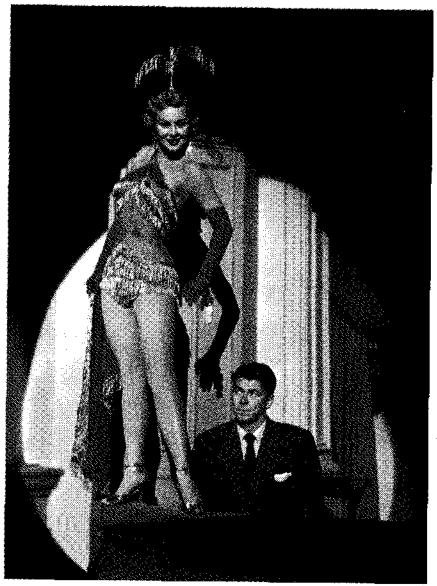


A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE METHOD PRESIDENT

Ronald Reagan and the movies.

BY ANTHONY LANE



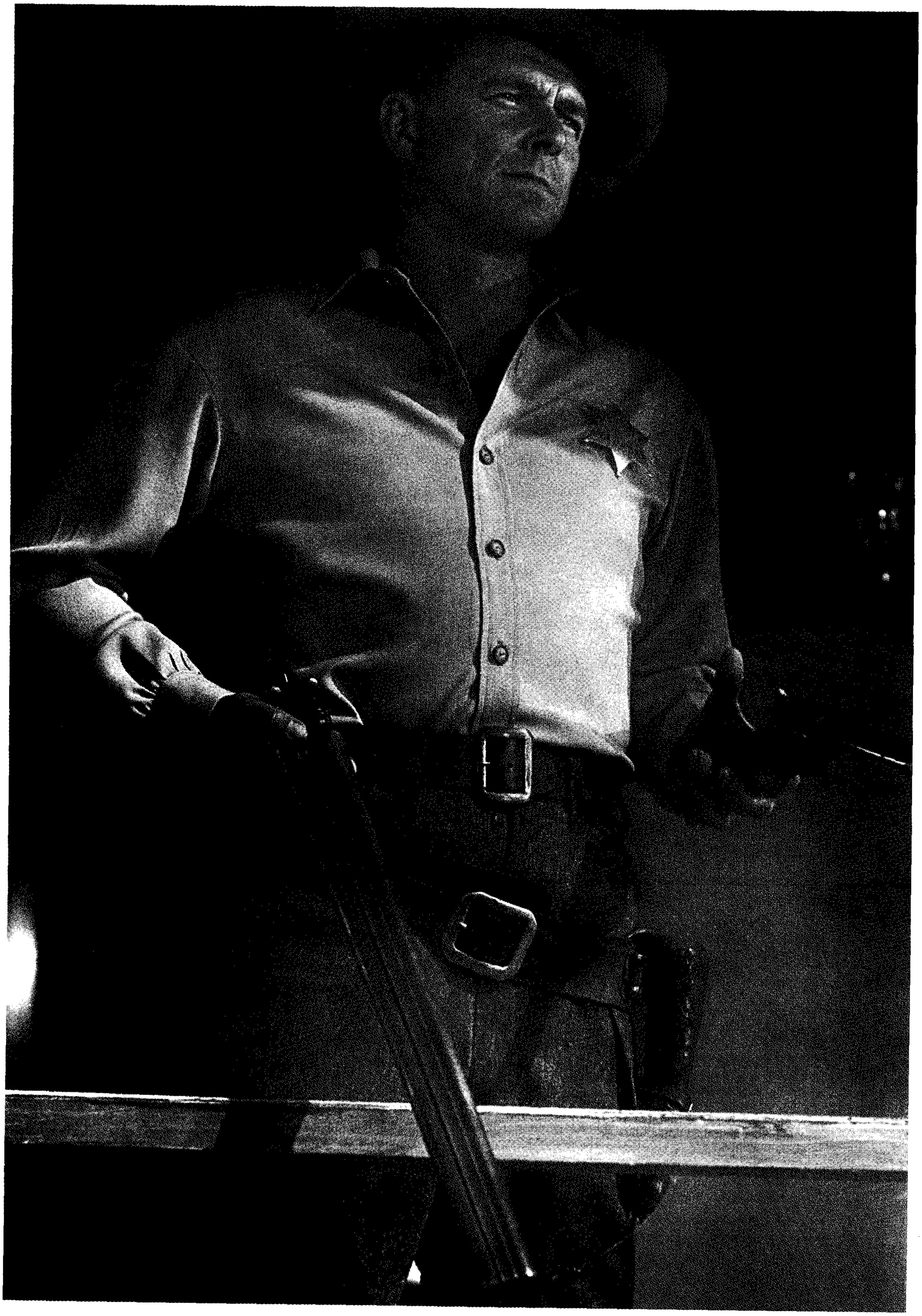
Reagan with Virginia Mayo in “She’s Working Her Way Through College”; with June Travis in “Love Is on the Air”; and, opposite, in “Law and Order.”

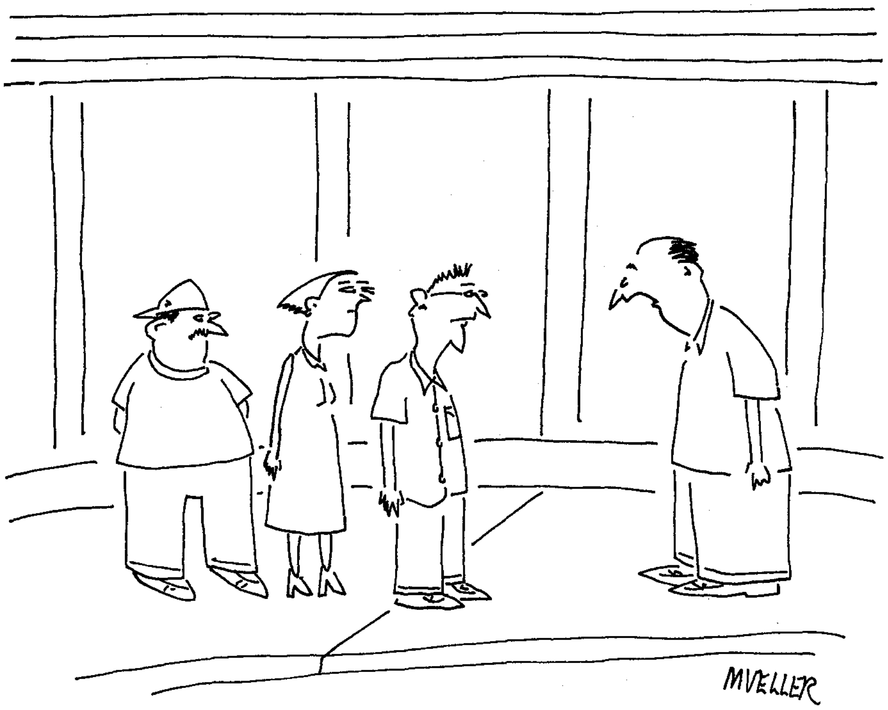
TOP, RIGHT: EVERETT COLLECTION; PHOTOFEST

What is your strongest memory of Ronald Reagan? Those who loved him have always treasured his arrival at the White House, in 1981, or, as they prefer to call it, dawn. The unconvinced will remember, with a sigh of relief, his departure, in 1989—the last walk to the helicopter, with a white scarf wrapped around his throat. The odd thing is that, whatever our opinion of the man, we talk about him as if we were discussing a movie. This is not to say that Reagan’s Presidency was short on policy; indeed, if we follow the rule that states that only those of determined ideological vigor earn the right to have a noun and an adjective named after them, then he emerges as a more gushing fount of ideas than any President since the Second World War. Reaganism, like Thatcherism across the Atlantic, was a triumphal creed of its time, whereas who now speaks of Fordism? Who ever claimed to be a Johnsonite? Reagan knew that an idea was nothing without its front man, and that a front man required big scenes—hence the grim, disappointed headshake to Gorbachev on a cold Reykjavík night, or the TV address that followed the Challenger disaster, with the President’s voice enfolding in a single breath, as only he could do, the homely and the galactic. Reagan didn’t just hate Communism; he sought concrete expression for his hatred by flying to Europe, standing next to the concrete in question, and exclaiming, “Tear down this wall!” Contemplation of other statesmen tends to focus, all too blurrily, on what kind of people we thought they were. With Reagan, our images stay crisp and particular, and we summon him to mind, like moviegoers, by reciting his best lines: “Where’s the rest of me?” “You ain’t seen nothing yet.”

Of course, we *had* seen it all before. Those lines come from “Kings Row,” starring Ronald Reagan, and “The Jazz Singer.” Reagan was, on his own ground, a cultural conservative; whenever he was proposing something new, be it an arms negotiation or a fiscal rethink, he tempered the novelty by couching it in words that reminded people, consolingly, of something they had heard before. And what better vehicle for such audacity than the movies: those instant popular rituals, handed down in the dark, untainted by a smear of the highbrow? “I’d rather be in Philadelphia,” he quipped from his hospital bed, after the assassination attempt, and the echo of W. C. Fields—a misquotation, but a common one—went some way toward muffling the shot. Even Reagan’s nickname, the Gipper, was a reference not to the original George Gipp, the hard-drinking Notre Dame football hero who died at twenty-five, but to Reagan’s blameless incarnation of him in “Knute Rockne—All American” (1940) and to the deathbed scene in which Rockne’s team is urged to “win just one for the Gipper.” It is a touching spectacle, although Reagan’s beaming, bright-cheeked expression is not that of a man at death’s door; it is not even that of a man in death’s neighborhood but that of a man who has never bothered to open the phone book and find out where death lives.

Now Reagan himself has died, and his movies are part of his life’s bric-a-brac, like the crates of memorabilia that pile up in the Xanadu of “Citizen Kane.” But you should not expect a Rosebud in a Reagan movie, nor will you find one; nothing was more strange and secret in Reagan than his openness, and the genial blaze of his ambition. Needless to say, it is impossible to see him clearly on film; the person he would grow to be, and the office he would hold, invariably get in the way of the actor we sit down to watch. When the villain of the 1952 Western “Law and Order” informs the virtuous





"You call yourselves a demographic?"

• •

Frame Johnson (Reagan) that he's not wanted in town, Johnson replies, "I've been not wanted in a lot of places. That never kept me from staying." The light scattering of true grit may be right for the part, but it sounds to us like a memo on foreign policy.

At the same time, we should not be content simply to find foreshadowings, or coincidences, within the landscape of his films. What matters is that, in forging a political style, the person from whom he learned most was his earlier self. Where a Method actor delves into private experience and drags up, into the light of the drama, whatever shards might prove valuable there, Reagan initiated the art of the Method President. He took gestures that he had refined onscreen (the soft, sideways jerk of the chin, for example, that opened his mouth, blew out a "heh," and signalled anything from a loving *shucks* to a tolerant exasperation), and floated them into the methodology of a canny public servant. By now, they were not just second nature to him; they were first nature, cleansed of every trace of the phony, and the result—as his detractors repeatedly failed to grasp—was not an act. There was no concealed Reagan hunkered down below, biding his time or biting his lip. He meant what he said.

Reagan appeared in fifty-three films. One could construct a full romantic narrative from some of the titles: "Swing Your Lady," "Accidents Will Happen," "Boy Meets Girl," "Naughty but Nice," "That Hagen Girl," and "John Loves Mary," closing, perhaps, with the ominous coda of "She's Working Her Way Through College." In that last movie, dating from 1952, Reagan plays an English professor who is tempted by the arrival, within the student body, of a burlesque dancer called Hot Garters Gertie. The Reagan who would later declare, as governor, that "the State of California has no business subsidizing intellectual curiosity" does not seem like an automatic choice to play a professional thinker. But he was schooled by Hollywood, and, if he was asked to portray a molder of young minds, who was he to disobey? The previous year, in "Bedtime for Bonzo," he had played a professor of psychology, and his demeanor was that of a man who could heal all psychological wounds, individual or communal, with a salve of creamy good cheer. The plot, it is true, forced him to practice his talents not on a disturbed patient but on a fairly con-

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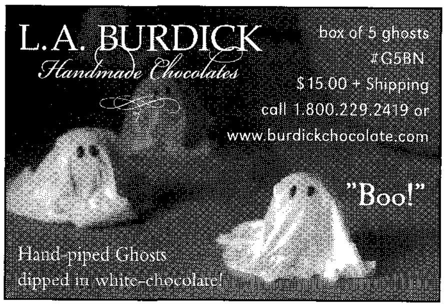
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tented chimpanzee; still, you can't have everything.

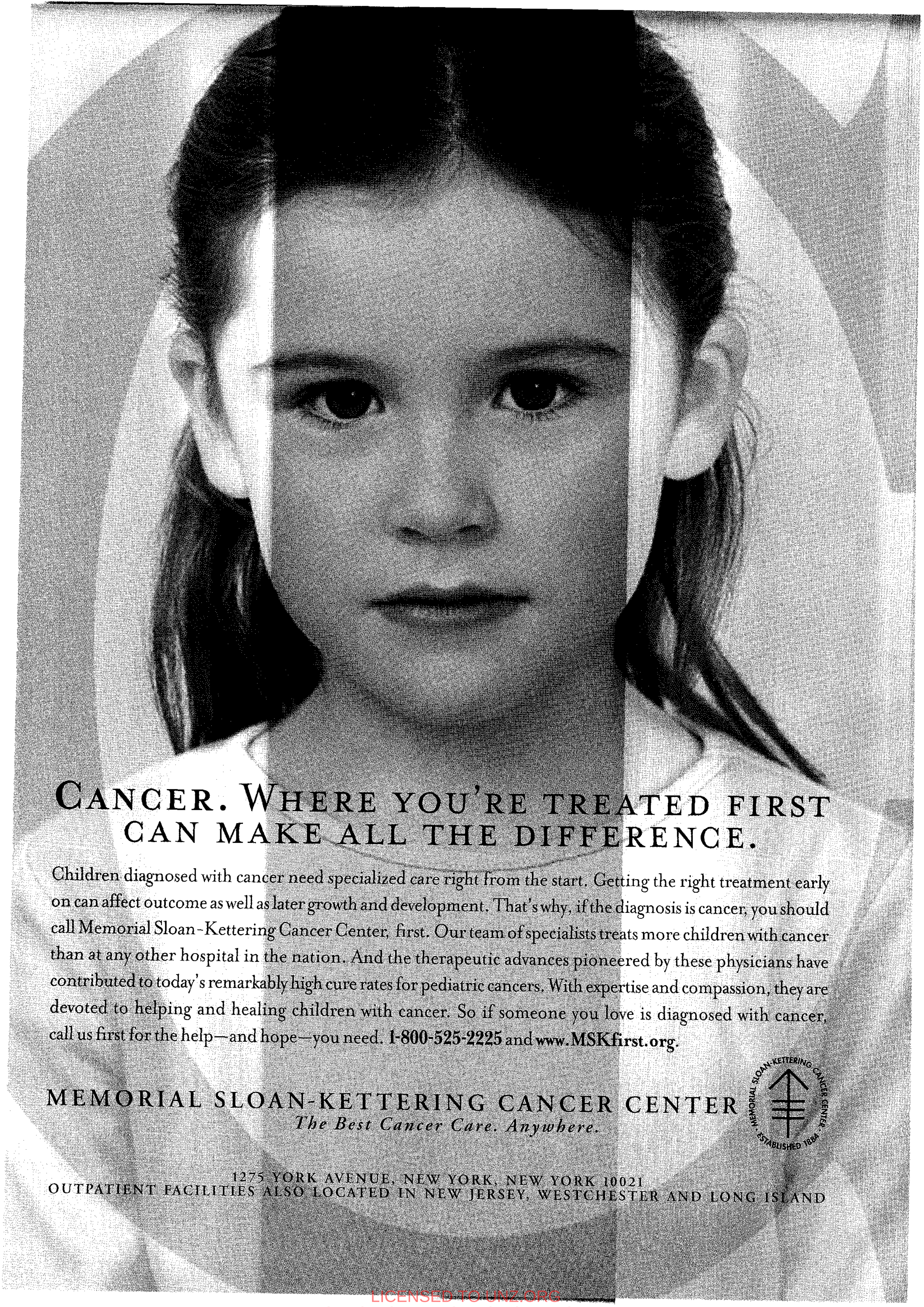
No one would have been more amused than Reagan himself if Hollywood had consigned him to a career of playing egghead roles. In fact, he tried all types, most of them allergic to abstract thought: a soldier, a sailor, a killer, a marshal, and, in one noble instance, a youthful George Custer, alongside Errol Flynn in "Santa Fe Trail" (1940). To understand why he succeeded in these multiple tasks—why America bought Ronald Reagan, as it would later buy into the promises he had to sell—you need to flick back to April, 1937, and to the sight of Dutch Reagan, age twenty-six, stepping off the train in Los Angeles.

He was not yet a movie star, or even an actor—not unless you count his school performances back in Dixon, Illinois, or a Eureka College production of an Edna St. Vincent Millay play ("I played a shepherd strangled before the final curtain," he recalled in his autobiography). In early 1937, he earned his keep in front of a microphone, working out of Des Moines for WHO Radio. His chosen field was sports, which meant heavy coverage of the Chicago Cubs, and that, in turn, meant—if you were super-keen, or if you fancied a semi-vacation—a spell in Catalina, California, watching the Cubs in spring training. This is where the tale turned rosy. In April of that year, Reagan was a real radio broadcaster; come June, he was playing a fictional radio broadcaster for a fictional radio station, reporting live from a shoot-out between crooks and cops. The film was "Love Is on the Air," and Reagan was the star, first up in the credits. That was pure Dutch: no cameos, no bit parts, no learning curve. He had walked into an agent's office, and the agent threw him at Warner Bros. After seven summers as a lifeguard in Dixon, he had shoulders the size of an ox's yoke, and that was enough for Warners. If he could save drowning people (seventy-seven in all), he could handle the deep end of the movie business. He took a screen test, assumed that he had flubbed it, and found himself on contract at two hundred dollars a week. Then he cabled his parents, spent a day with a dialogue coach, stepped on set, and spoke his lines. It was that easy. And people still wonder why he was an optimist.

It is one thing to pledge yourself to the American dream; quite another to have the dream sneak up behind you, scoop you up, and bear you toward an illimitable future. Reagan did the smart thing and decided not to hide his pleasure, strolling into his début picture with a smile on his face which, barring a few downturns, was still there when he left the White House. Other actors have to force a smile, or crack a smile; but a smile was genuinely the most comfortable arrangement of Reagan's features, just as that lippy scowl came most easily to Bogart, or those dread-widened eyes to Peter Lorre. On the occasions when something tauter was required, Reagan seemed ill at ease, like a man in the midst of a heavy lunch with no way to loosen his belt. "Do you know anything about insanity?" Eleanor Parker asks him in "The Voice of the Turtle" (1947). "Not a thing," Reagan answers merrily, as if she had asked him what he knew about New Zealand, or modern dance.

That is why "Love Is on the Air" was just the ticket. It's an undemanding broth of light comedy and even lighter romance, complete with a typical, Depression-era gibe at rich swindlers—department-store owners and other natural Reaganites—who take money from the pockets of ordinary citizens. As the muckraking reporter Andy McCaine, Reagan looks sharper, even flashier, than in any other film—the pinstripes on his suit are a touch too wide, and the hat is tipped back on his head at an angle that no gentleman would allow. McCaine's humor never fails, not even when his boss tries to warn him off, saying, "I want you to confine your program to social highlights. Keep politics out of it."

"Love Is on the Air" was filmed in three weeks. A few days after shooting ended, Reagan was assigned to his next picture, "Sergeant Murphy," whose title character, it turns out, was a horse. In 1938, seven Ronald Reagan features were released; the same number appeared the following year. Such prolificacy shows that Reagan was industrious, adaptable, quick to learn, and slow to grouch; more important, it reminds us



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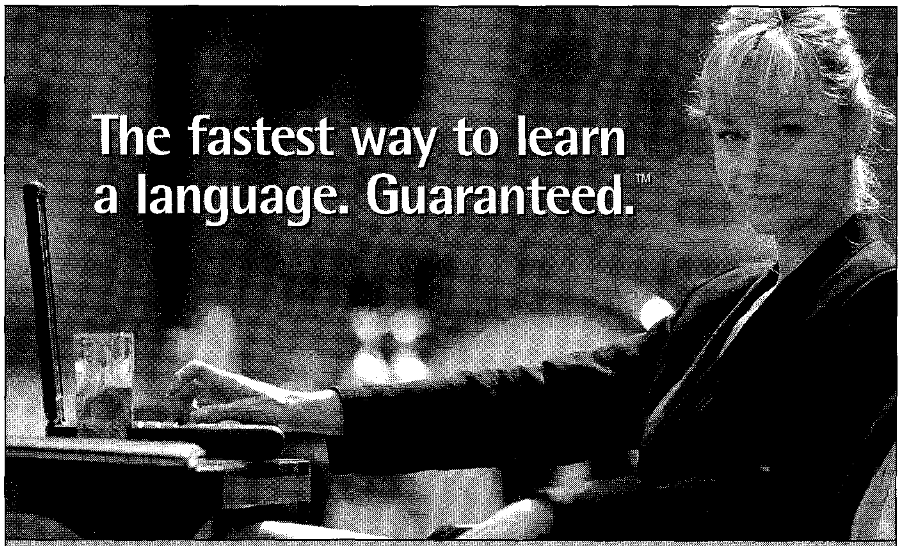
what an ideal creature he was in the age—Jurassically old and lost to us—of the B movie.

When people took Reagan to task during his Presidency, they'd often say, "He's a B-movie actor." Reagan himself would bridle, with some justice, at the B label, insisting that movies like "Kings Row" (1943), his personal favorite, were very much A-list productions. Yet he, more than anybody, understood the steady, humming power of the B picture. It was not just a launching pad for many a career as a major star. It was also a kind of research facility for the studios, where moods and plots, as well as players, could be tried out. As a result, to watch a short, second-string feature from the early Reagan years is to be granted a cruder, less worked-up, more authentic glimpse of the period, with its jumble of fear and fantasy, than could be gleaned from masterpieces alone.

Standout productions of 1940, say, included "Rebecca" and "The Philadelphia Story," but what about "Murder in the Air," which showed the same year? Precisely because it *doesn't* stand out, because it remains buried in the dust of the archives, it seems worthy of disinterment. The film may be little more than an earnest plea against American isolationism, with Reagan and Eddie Foy, Jr., playing a couple of federal agents on the tail of foreign troublemakers. Yet that earnestness, which had real political roots, flowers into a comic-strip innocence, as when Foy finds a secret message hidden in the heel of a shoe and exclaims, "Well, smack me down and call me names!" If you waited forty years or more, you would see such Nazi-baiting frivolities revisited in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," an A-grade pastiche; but B land was where they properly belonged, and Reagan was a prince of the realm.

There is a fine moment in "An American Life," Reagan's autobiography, when he turns, with a loving sigh, into an archeologist of his country's media:

> When "Amos and Andy" came on the air, the whole world stopped: If you were at a movie theater, they'd shut off the projector, turn on the lights, and a radio set would be placed on the stage while everybody sat quietly in their seats for a half hour listening to the latest episode.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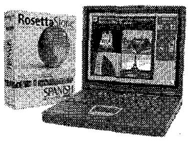

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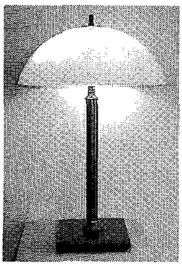

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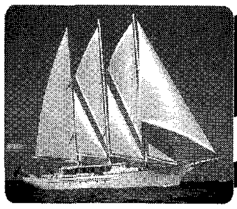

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Something in him clearly clings to this spectacle of mass rapture, revelling in the implications of an audience at once titillated and compliant (note the adverb "quietly"). Reagan appears to have understood, with the force of untrained instinct, that, whatever the medium in hand, the great thing was the grab. You beckoned to your listener, your viewer, or your voter, and, once contact was made, he or she was yours.

There was no extortion in this procedure; like an advertiser, you flattered your customers with the illusion—Reagan would call it the fact—that they were drawn to you of their own free will. That is why, for the Reagans of this world, the Hays Code, like other means of circumscription, would never be too much of a burden: it was already in the best interests of American celebrity not to offend. If Reagan became, as Garry Wills says in "Reagan's America," "the perfect Hollywood chastity symbol, one whose innocence became indistinguishable from ignorance," it was not merely a question of cutting out curses or flickers of impropriety. It was a question of never fending off—of reaching even to those outside your natural constituency and suggesting, with near-comic diffidence, that you might be the man for them.

The world sensed that gesture at around ten o'clock on November 19, 1985, when President Reagan welcomed Mikhail Gorbachev, with a hand on the arm, to the Fleur d'Eau, a lakeside villa near Geneva. They shut themselves away for a one-on-one session that was scheduled to last fifteen minutes, finally emerging an hour later. Reagan, asked what he and the General Secretary had discussed, winked and answered, "Jet lag." According to your view of the President's capabilities, you were either appalled or intrigued by that overstay, but fans of his old movies will have been reassured. They will have remembered, for instance, "Angels Wash Their Faces" (1939), in which Deputy District Attorney Patrick Remson (Reagan) goes to the home of a local boy once known as a troublemaker and confronts him. "I've come to the conclusion that it'd be a good idea to give all kids a stretch in reform school"—that wink again—"if they turn out as well as you have," he says. Remson smiles, and the boy begins to realize that he is on firm ground:

> "Say, you're all right!"
> "Well, there are opinions to the contrary, but thanks anyway."

That is unmistakable Reagan, the modesty and the righteous accomplishment shuffled smoothly into the deck. The kid's older sister offers her congratulations: "What you said to Gabe'll make him feel a lot better about things." The man who would later try to do for his country what his character did for Gabe asks if there's any more coffee. She points at the pot, so Remson gets up and serves himself. There is not an atom of resentment in his having to fill his own cup—after all, he's building up to asking this girl for a date. He's not a seducer, or a stiff, or a wise guy, or a tough guy; he's just a guy, and that is why, by the end of the following year, Warner Bros., when the studio came to rank its feature players—the indispensables, one notch below the legends—put Reagan at the top of the list.

In less time than it takes to earn a college degree, Reagan the radio jock had risen to the stars. The rise was assured, although a more nervous being might have fretted about his status in the firmament. For every "Dark Victory," in which Reagan played third fiddle to a sight-impaired Bette Davis and an Irish-accented Humphrey Bogart, there was, from the same year, an "Angels Wash Their Faces." The following year brought his most famous role, as George Gipp, but it also brought "Tugboat Annie Sails Again." The unkindest thing one can say about Reagan the actor—for he was hardly ever embarrassing, often endearing, as reliable as the watch that he wore on the inside of his wrist—is that his reliability could slacken into dullness, and that he was the sort of person to whom casting agents turned when sequels were afoot. Just as "Angels Wash Their Faces" was a squeaky-clean successor to "Angels with Dirty Faces," the raucous James Cagney vehicle of 1938, so "Tugboat Annie Sails Again" (1940) was meant to cash in on "Tugboat Annie," a 1933 hit starring Wallace Beery and Marie Dressler. Reagan plays a hunk named

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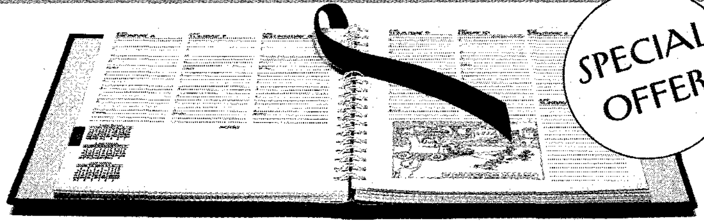

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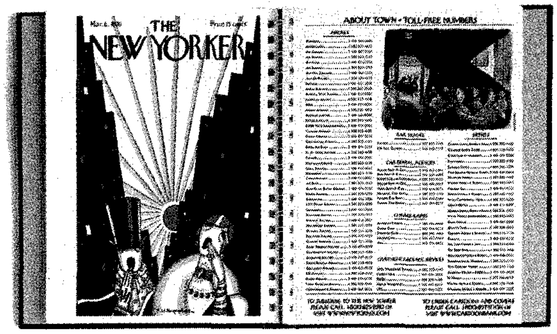

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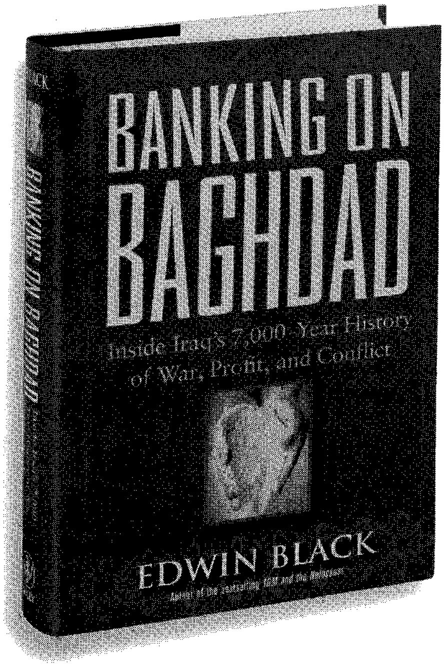
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Eddie Kent, who indicates his seaworthiness by donning a striped T-shirt and peaked cap. He has a spat with a rich young blonde and fools her into jumping off the dock, but they patch it up. She says to him, "You know, I'm really surprised to find you're a human at times," and he returns the gibe, asking, "How would you know?"

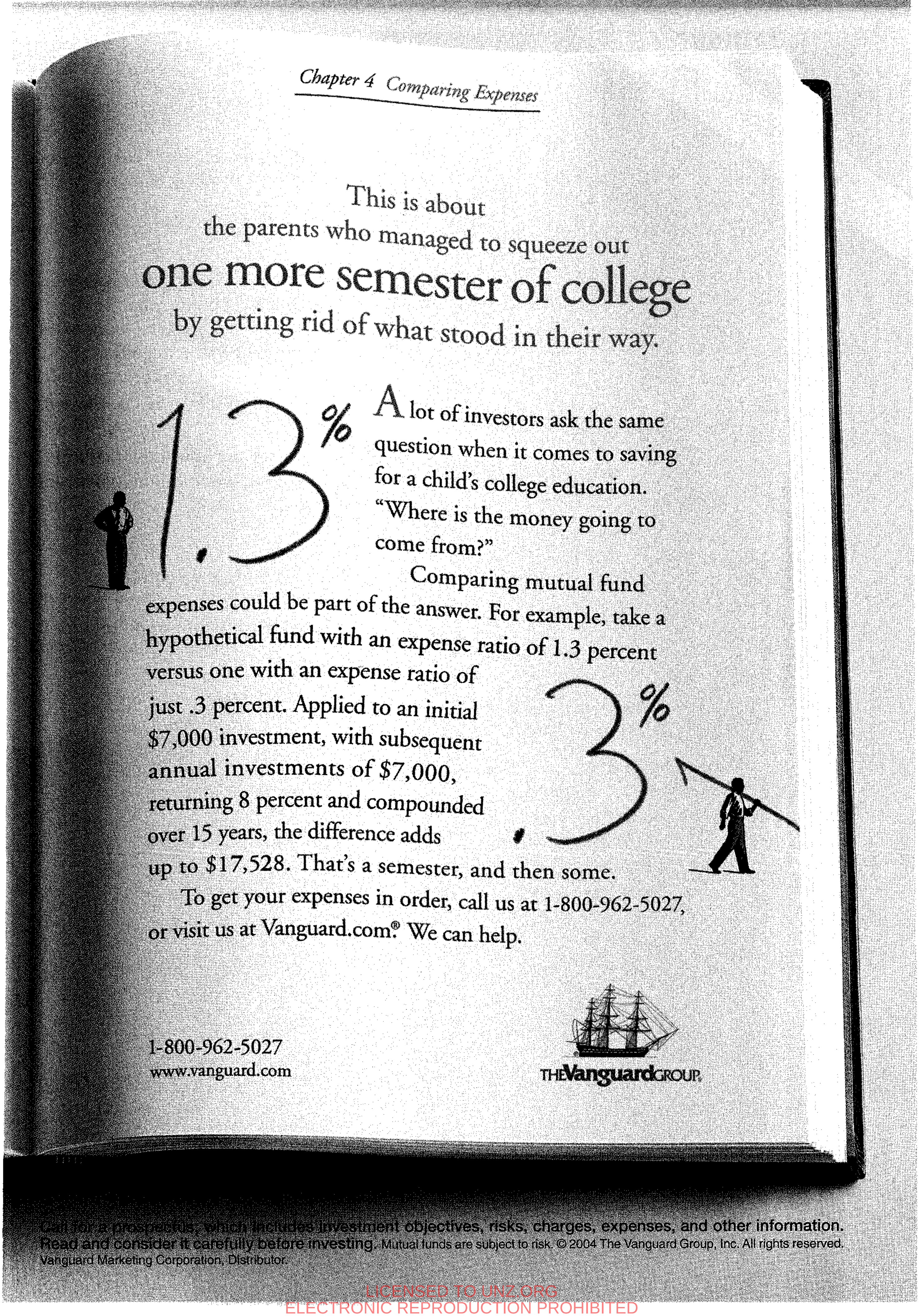
It's a nice exchange, fired off with a screwball tartness, but it feels like flirtation for its own sake, not a prelude to anything else. There is, however, a twist: the woman is played by Jane Wyman, who married Reagan that same year. The shock of seeing them together is that she is quite something, foxy and minxy, with her comebacks even perter than her nose. You can sense the fun rising off her, and you can sense, too, the relaxed manner in which Reagan joins in the fun without allowing it to get out of hand. Wyman divorced her husband in 1948.

Perhaps the least convincing opinion reported in Edmund Morris's "Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan" comes from an acquaintance of Reagan's in Hollywood who claimed that Reagan was "a greater swordsman" than Errol Flynn. Sure, and Ava Gardner was lucky to get the leftovers from June Allyson's bed. One of the distinguishing features of Reagan's screen career was the large, comforting blank space where his sexual purpose was supposed to be. The magazine *Motion Picture* ran an early piece about Reagan titled "What! No Sex Appeal?" Correct. He may have been tall, dark, and handsome. From the back, the lustre of his hair may have resembled a wet black pelt, like a jaguar's, and that was before you discovered the perfect pompadour at the front. But one of the keys to his success, from the nineteen-twenties to the eighties, was that he posed no personal menace; although as President he was blessed with boundless appeal, his Presidency was virginal. Reagan the incurious, the politician who would swat aside historical complication in favor of an inspirational story, is of a piece with Reagan the faithful, who met Nancy and stayed.

Such decorum, it seems to me, was learned onscreen; he could spray charm around like a fire hose, but it was nothing like the charm of Cary Grant. With Grant, women sensed that he could make a move any time he liked, and the fact that he often chose not to served to swell the heart of his mystery. Reagan was the boy next door, and there is nothing more weirdly suited to his chivalrous gifts than "The Voice of the Turtle." He plays a soldier on furlough in 1944; Eleanor Parker plays a single woman; he passes a rainy night, by invitation, on Parker's couch; and each of them spends the rest of the movie straining to prove to everybody—above all themselves—that they absolutely have not slept together. "You don't know how good that looks . . . and feels . . . and is," moans the future President, gazing with undisguised longing at a single bed.

Only once does the movie sparkle, after Reagan moves out to a hotel for his second night, and then returns for breakfast. In he strolls, sniffing with approval: "Ya' know, if I were a woman, I'd wear coffee for perfume." It's a dumbfounding line, catapulting the opposite sex from the boudoir to the kitchen, wafting away the last reek of the erotic. Of course, Reagan was merely delivering a character's dialogue, but having learned something by heart, he seemed to take it to heart. When he spoke those words, was he not already aligning himself in preparation for the blithe domestic geometries of the Eisenhower age? He goes on, "I brought the Sunday papers so we could really mess up the apartment. Can't do without the Sunday funnies." It's a nothing moment, and it's my favorite slice of Reagan, demonstrating just how cleanly a Norman Rockwell attitude could be brought to life. Then Reagan takes down a dishcloth, tucks it into his belt like an apron, and starts on the scrambled eggs.

This was not the only occasion on which he dabbled in domesticity. Connoisseurs of the surreal will also revel in a sequence from "Law and Order" in which Reagan, playing an ex-marshal, reflects on the decline of a nearby town. "You can clean it up in one day. All you have to do is kill five or six people," he says. Tough words, but even as he speaks them he is carefully brushing paste onto a sheet of flowery wallpaper—a particularly fetching pattern, designed to impress his betrothed (Dor-



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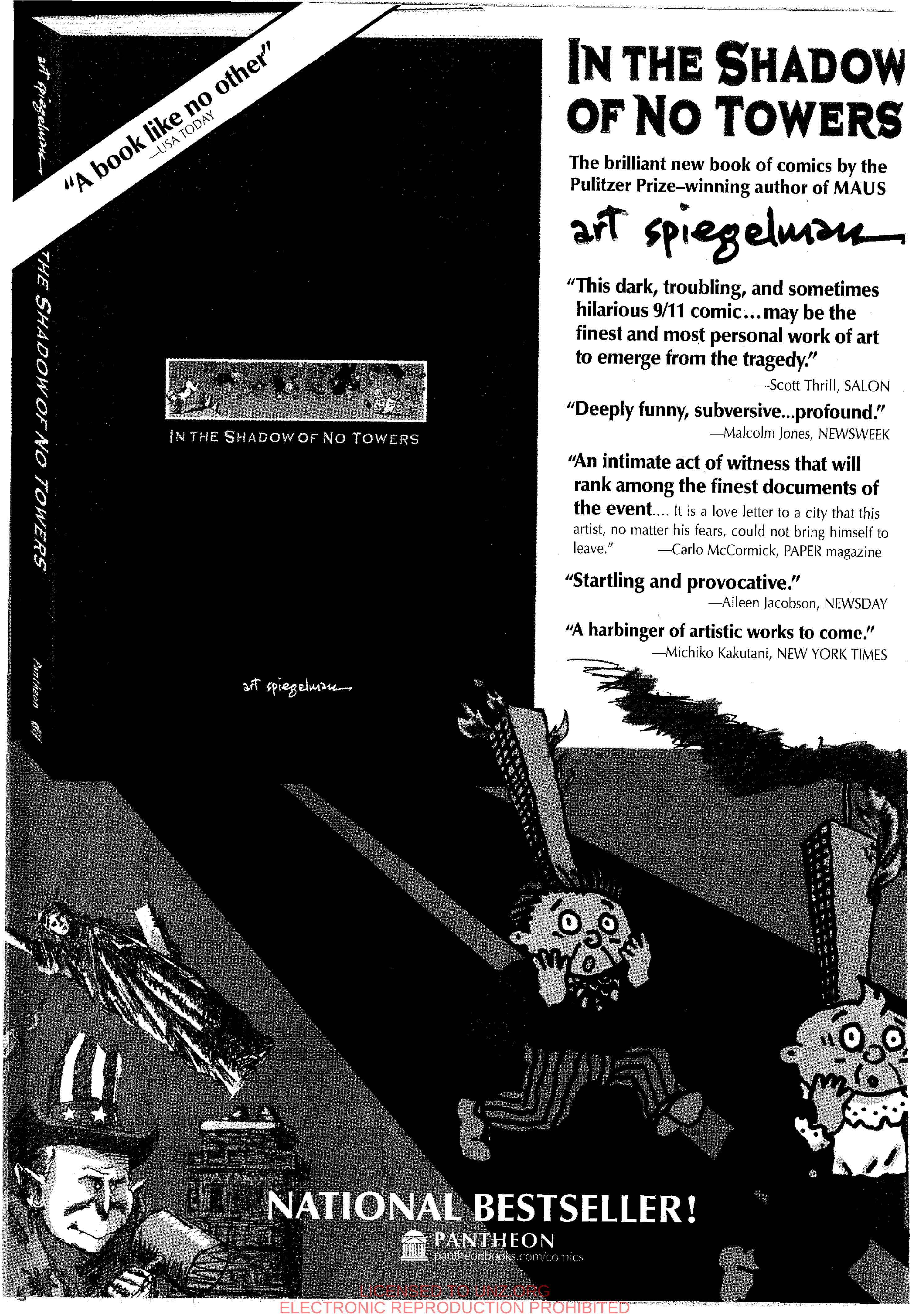
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othy Malone). The question is, was Malone the only target here? Or were there millions of other housewives who needed pleasing?

We may marvel now at those who lined up to watch Reagan onscreen, and reassure ourselves that there's no accounting for taste. In fact, there *is* accounting for taste, and it comes in the shape of an audit undertaken for Warner Bros. in the year 1941-42. It's a bar chart, showing the breakdown of Reagan's appeal, based on "the percentage of ticket-buyers in each group who say that the name of this player on the front of a theater would make them want to buy a ticket." His magic worked more on girls of seventeen and younger than on women older than thirty; more on the poor who earned less than twenty-five dollars a week than on the prosperous who earned over sixty dollars; and more on towns of fewer than ten thousand souls than on cities. If Karl Rove saw a chart like this, his eyes would mist over. Reagan had not been born to wealth, and his primary appeal was not to wealthy men; it was to men and women who strove, unaided, so that wealth might come their way. He still had work to do if he wanted to pull in the folks from the middle-income bracket, but, like an alkaline Robert Mitchum, he was careful never to give the impression of a man in a hurry. Tax cuts, like Heaven, could wait.

At the time that the chart was compiled, he might even have put taxes on the side of the angels. An unblushing fan of the New Deal, Reagan, as he admitted, "idolized" Roosevelt, and voted for Truman in 1948. A snapshot of his liberal years comes from Don Siegel, later to find fame as the director of "Dirty Harry," who in 1949 made "Night Unto Night," starring Reagan and Viveca Lindfors. (Reagan plays a microbiologist who suffers from epilepsy. If that sounds adventurous, the role of the "philosophical artist" went to Broderick Crawford, the human Buick.) In his memoirs, Siegel wrote:

> Ronald Reagan had definite opinions on politics and didn't hesitate to express them. At this time of his life he was left wing in speech and action. . . . One night, riding in the back of Ronald's car on our way to dinner, he spouted off endlessly to his wife, Jane

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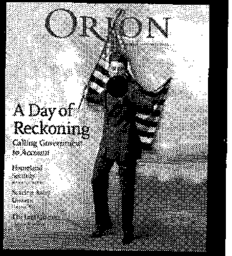

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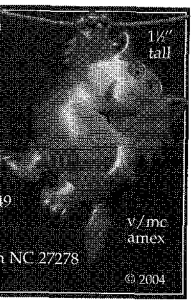

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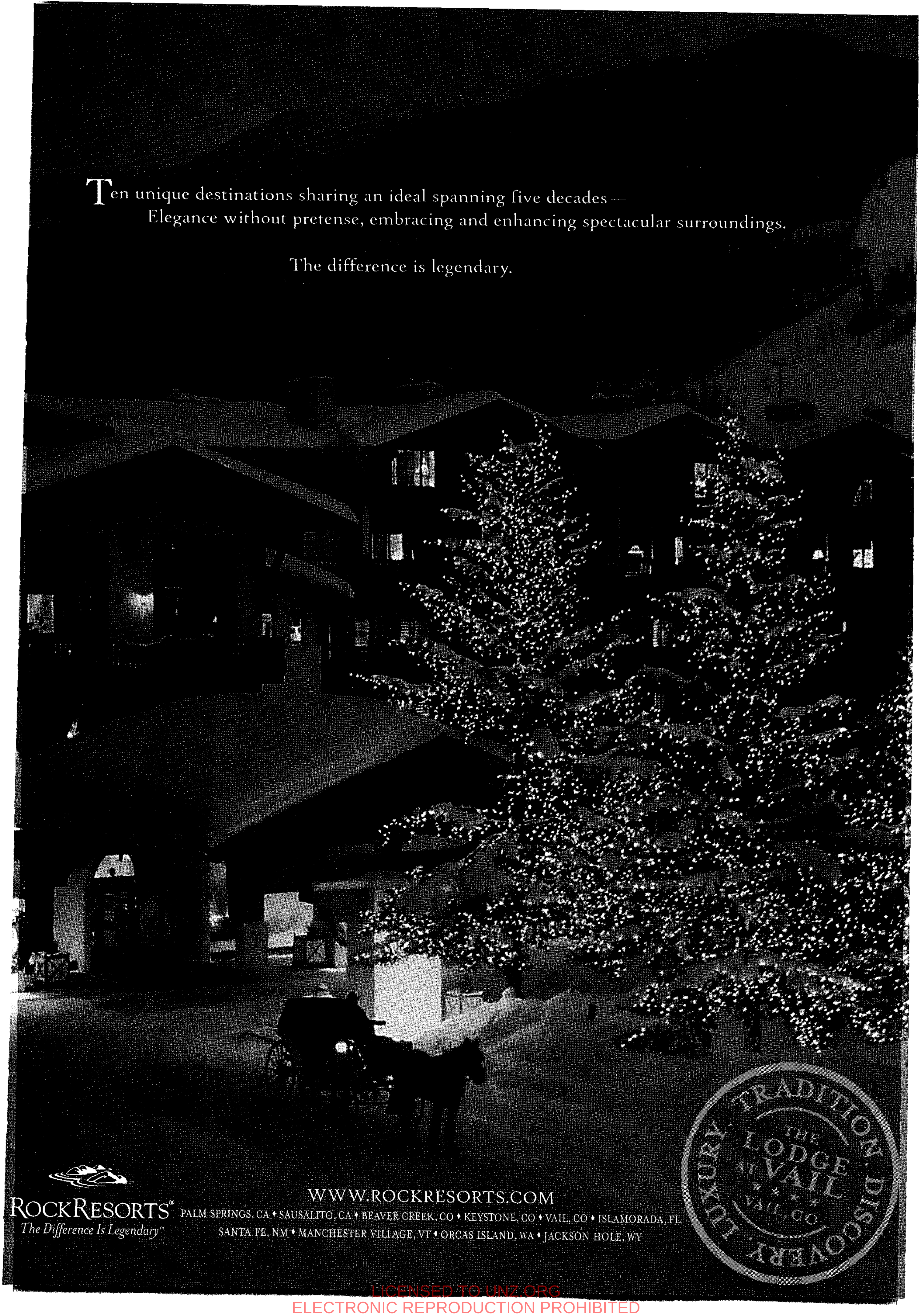
Wyman, and to Viveca and myself. Wyman could take no more of it.

WYMAN: (*To Reagan*) Hey "diarrhoea-of-the-mouth," shut up! Maybe we can get a word in edgewise.

It is not the *most* fragrant portrait of a marriage, but the spouting rings true. Reagan had started in Hollywood as a union man, rising to become president of the Screen Actors Guild in 1947. But there was a measure of Communist sympathy within the Guild, and it was Reagan's drive to expose what, in "An American Life," he labelled "Moscow's attempted takeover of Hollywood" that clarified his patriotism. During the war, his weak eyesight rendered him unfit for combat, so he stayed in Hollywood and made training and propaganda films such as "This Is the Army." There is no mistaking the fraying of his film work after the war; no one could sit through the submarine drama "Hellcats of the Navy" (1957), which makes life beneath the waves look about as hellish as a wet kitten, without suggesting that its star—and his co-star, Nancy Davis—seek employment elsewhere. From 1954 to 1962, Reagan was the presenter of the TV show "General Electric Theatre"; his eloquence struck a chord, and he wound up touring G.E. plants around the country, expounding his faith in free enterprise. Reagan did not register as a Republican until 1962, despite the fact that, in his creepy phrase, "by 1960 I had completed the process of self-conversion." It is no accident that 1964 saw both the little-mourned death of his first career, with "The Killers," and the loudly heralded birth of his second. Once he had supported—and, by the force of his passion, outstripped—Barry Goldwater's campaign with a speech on NBC that October, there was no going back to soldiers, eggbeaters, and epileptic microbiologists. From here, the path was clear, and it would culminate in a governorship, two terms as President, and a walkabout through Red Square in 1988, otherwise known as Hollywood's attempted takeover of Moscow.

So vivid do those scenes remain, and so frictionless was the ease with which Reagan hit his mark on the world stage, that most of his old pictures seem hokey and creaking by comparison. As I sat through "The Girl from Jones Beach" (1949), acquired on tape from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, I realized that I was probably the only person on the planet who was watching it that day. Reagan plays a commercial illustrator who creates a fantasy pinup from the body parts of a dozen real women—Daphne's ankle, Sarah's legs, and so on. It may have been a movie of some glint and substance at the time (the script is by I. A. L. Diamond, who later co-wrote "Some Like It Hot"), but the tide has washed it away, and the President himself would probably have preferred to forget not just the leer of its sexism but, far more shaming, the Czech accent he adopts halfway through, as a ploy to win Virginia Mayo. When opponents of President Reagan spoke of his faulty memory—I am not talking of the distressing affliction of Alzheimer's disease that was visited upon him after he left office but of his ludic, selective way with the data of his (and other people's) history in the full pomp of his Administration—they neglected the fact that this very slippage may have been part of his appeal. Everybody's past slides in and out of range, and we would probably distrust anybody who boasted of total recall; why elect a Chief Executive, if you want him to be a hard drive? What people liked about Reagan was, in part, the colorful array of his software—all those movie clips, football plays, one-liners, and favorite stills that had long since been downloaded into his head.

The one Reagan story that I always found impossible to accept was the "Casablanca" myth—the rumor that he and Ann Sheridan were slated to appear as Rick and Ilsa. Really? Reagan as Rick, eyes brimming with contempt for his own romantic obsession? O.K., Rick was said to have run guns for republicans, but they weren't proper Republicans; they were *Spanish* republicans, and Communists to boot. Then, at the back of Edmund Morris's "Dutch," I found a footnote explaining that the role supposedly waiting for Reagan was that of Victor Laszlo. That makes sense: the square in the white suit, miraculously recovered from a murderous ordeal, seated beside his beloved, and conversing icily with the bad guys without being so dumb as to upset the table and storm out. It could be the beginning of a beautiful leadership: Ronald Reagan flies off to America, in a fog, and saves the world. ♦



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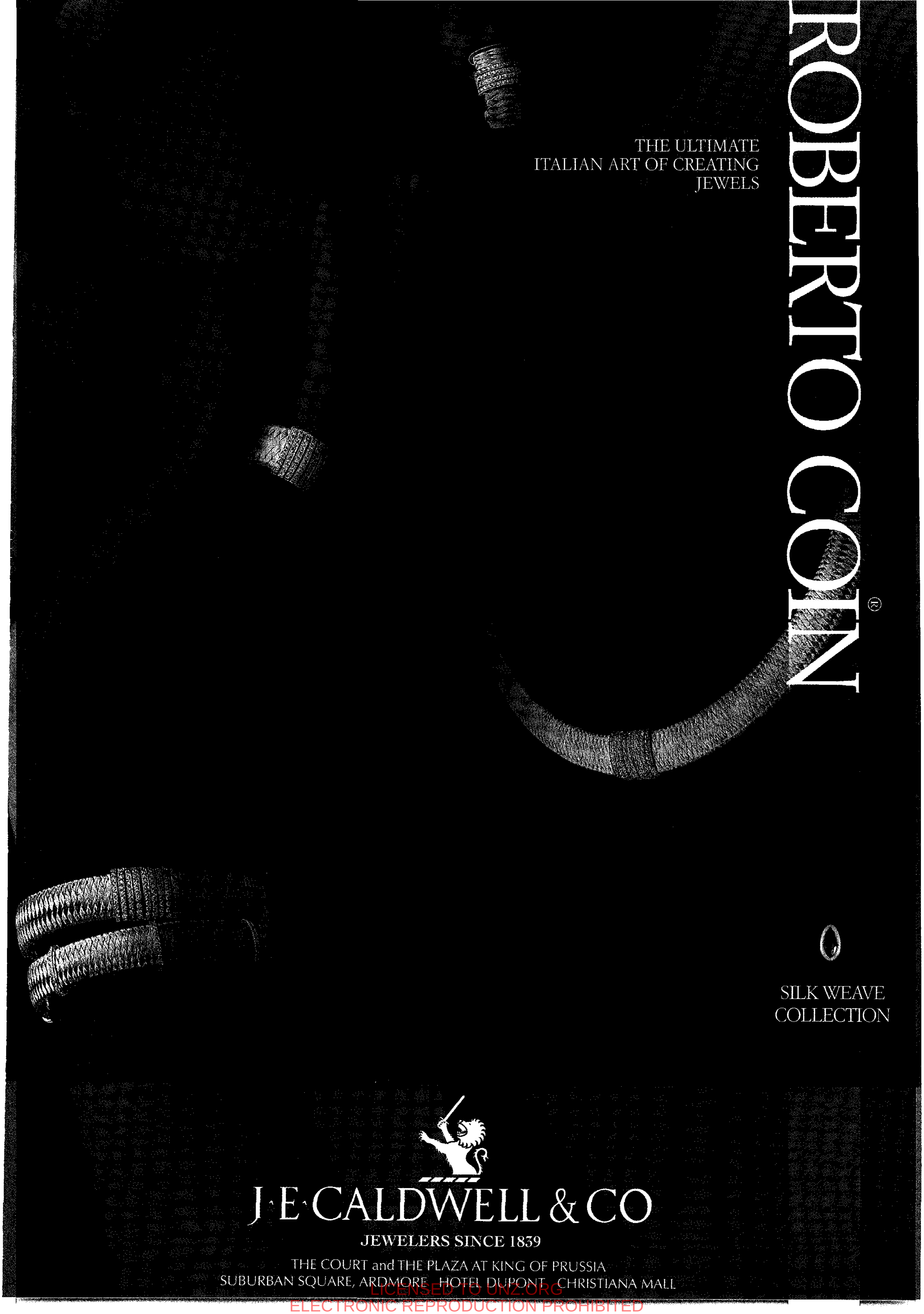
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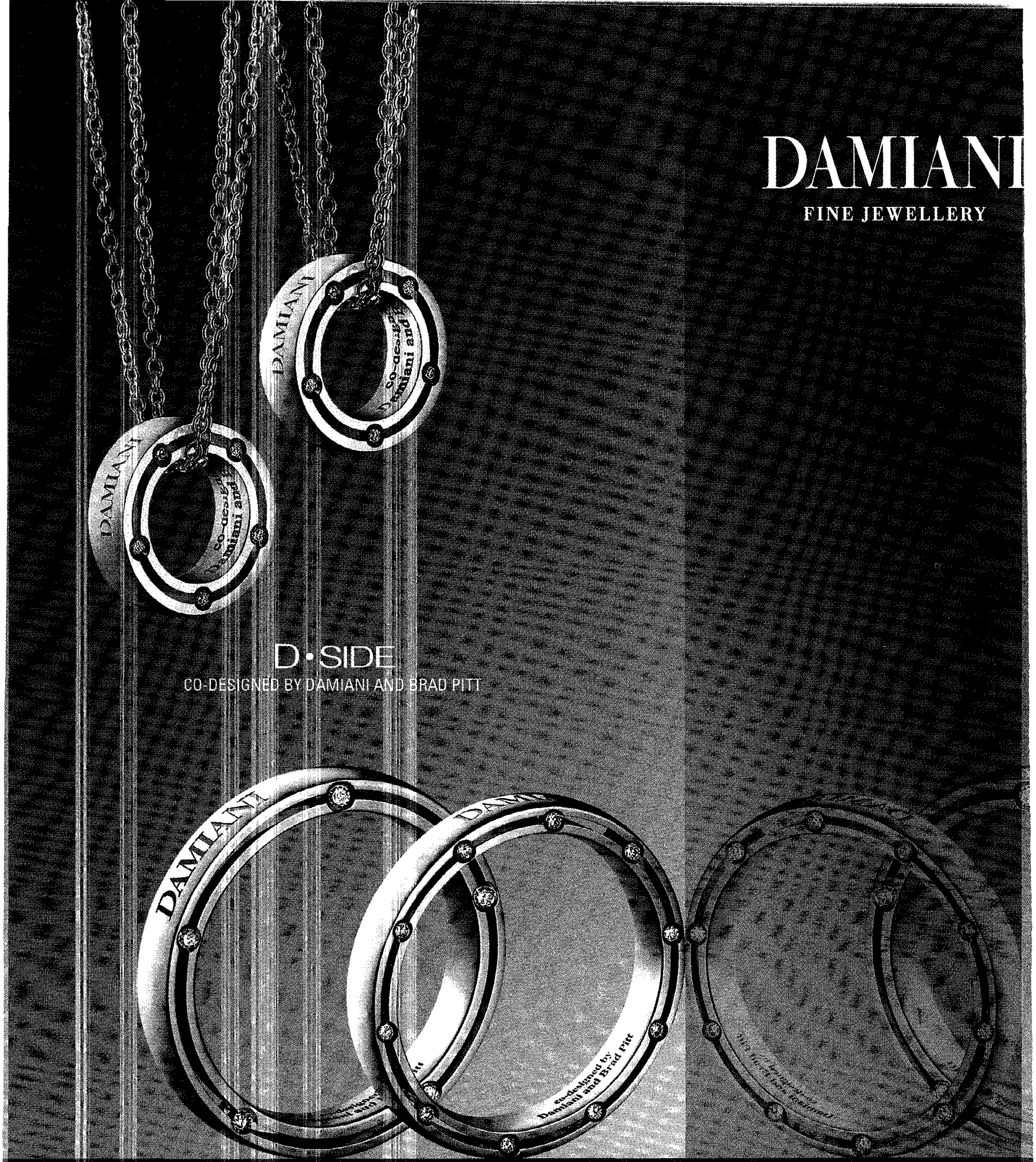

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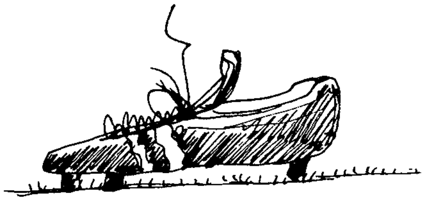
BRIEFLY NOTED

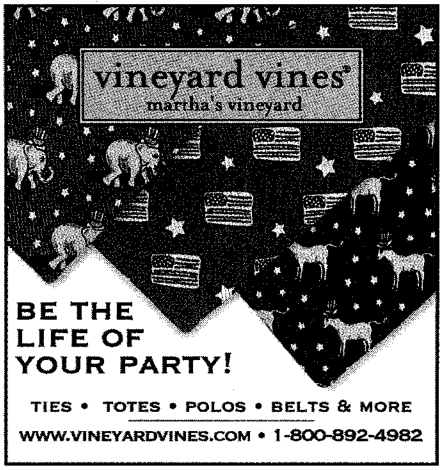
When Presidents Lie, *by Eric Alterman (Viking; $25.95).* In 1964, as Congress prepared to vote on the Gulf of Tonkin resolution authorizing the use of force in Vietnam, Senator William Fulbright said that he simply did not "normally assume" that "a President lies to you." That was a mistake, according to Alterman's compendious history of Presidential lying. Alterman, a columnist for *The Nation*, refers to the Bush Administration as a "post-truth Presidency," but in general he is hardest on Democrats. He writes of Roosevelt's "deliberate mendacity" at Yalta and Kennedy's "nasty double game" during the Cuban missile crisis—tactics that, respectively, he claims, started and deepened the Cold War. Alterman argues that such behavior, whatever its justification, invariably exacts a price—L.B.J.'s lies about the Tonkin incident consumed his Presidency—and that the greatest dangers come when an Administration starts to believe its own lies.

Perilous Times, *by Geoffrey R. Stone (Norton; $35).* Stone's history examines America's tendency in wartime to compromise First Amendment rights in the name of national security. During the Civil War, a former congressman, Clement Vallandigham, was imprisoned and nearly executed for objecting to the conflict as "wicked, cruel, and unnecessary"; in the First World War, the anarchist Mollie Steimer was sentenced to fifteen years for calling capitalism the "only one enemy of the workers of the world." Each of these measures seemed essential to victory at the time; later, however, pardons were issued. We may one day feel the same about Guantánamo and the Patriot Act, but not all wrongs are immediately remedied. In 1971, Attorney General John Mitchell tried to use the contentious Espionage Act of 1917 (which, largely forgotten, had never been revoked) to prevent the publication of the Pentagon Papers. It is still law today.



Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America, *by George C. Edwards III (Yale; $26).* Someday, there will likely be yet another serious effort to get rid of the electoral college, America's weird mechanism for picking its President, in order to replace it with the method used to choose every other elected official in the federal government: a direct election. (The strongest such effort, following the 1968 squeaker, was foiled by a Senate filibuster.) This crisp handbook, by a political scientist keen to bring such a day closer, outlines the origins of the electoral college—which the framers thought would be a kind of nominating convention, with the final choice being made by the House of Representatives—and demonstrates the many ways it violates democratic norms. Edwards uses empirical evidence to demolish such common arguments in the college's favor as its reputed benefits for small states and for minorities.

Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire, *by Anne Norton (Yale; $25).* Many neoconservative intellectuals and Bush Administration officials claim Leo Strauss, the philosopher who fled Nazi Germany for the United States in the nineteen-thirties, as their political forebear. Norton studied at Chicago, the center of the Straussian academic universe, and the book has the flavor of an amusing tell-all. (When she moves to Brown and discovers Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida, one horrified Straussian says, "You have gone over to the dark side of the Force.") Norton's account is a sort of critical field guide to Straussians, taxonomizing their "variants and subspecies" and assessing the ways in which some of them have affected U.S. foreign policy. She points out that, whereas neoconservatives talk of clashes between Islam and the West, Strauss was a close reader of medieval Muslim political theory and decried Western intellectuals for their ignorance of the non-Western world: "The Straussians have set themselves to guard the gates Strauss opened."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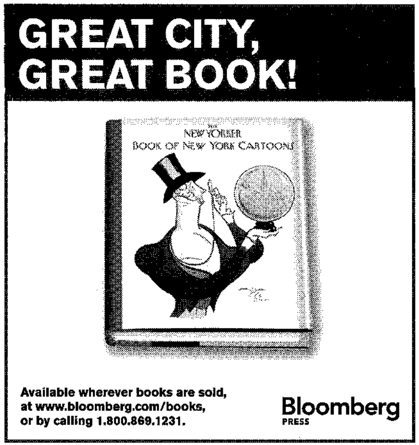
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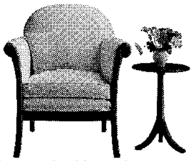
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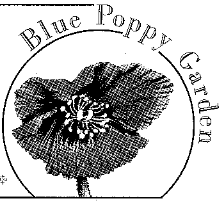
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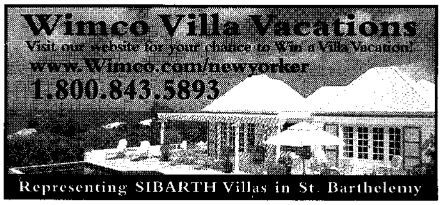
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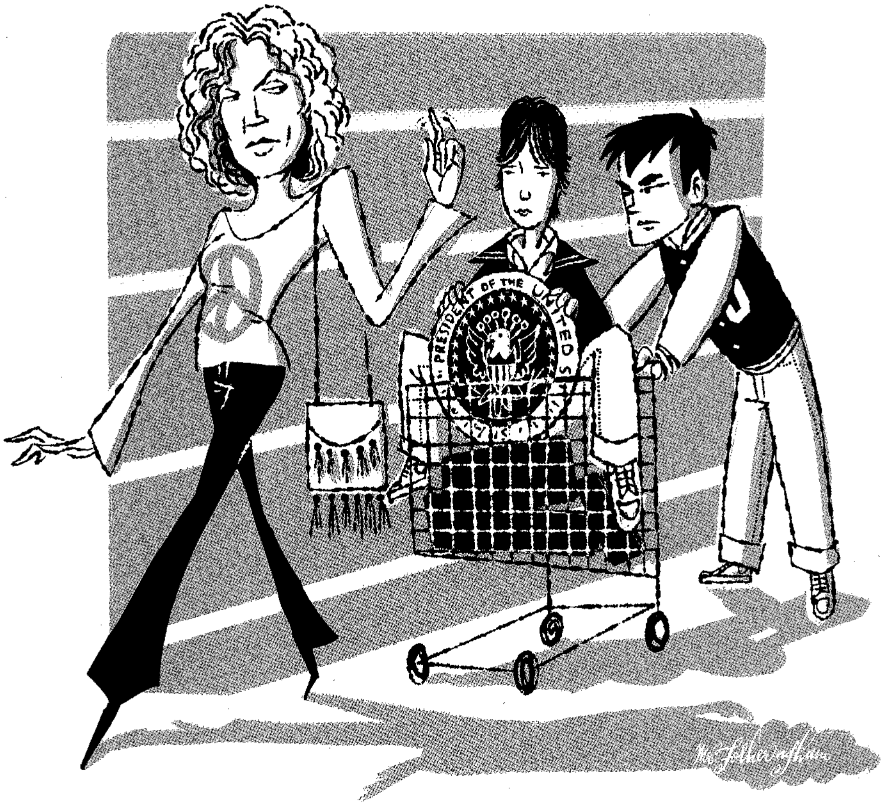
ON TELEVISION

BRINGING UP BOBBY

The boy who would be President.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

The advance publicity for "Jack & Bobby," a Sunday-night WB drama that débuted a month ago, took pains to note that the show has nothing to do with the Kennedys, even though it is about two brothers, one of whom grows up to become the President of the United States and one of whom dies before his time. And the show certainly hasn't profited from any lingering confusion in prospective viewers' minds about a possible Camelot connection; its low ratings indicate that no Kennedyesque mystique is clinging to it. Still, I am a little perplexed by "Jack & Bobby" 's inability to catch on; for starters, I would have assumed that most women in their mid-thirties to their mid-fifties would easily be roped in by a show that stars Christine Lahti as a smart, overbearing, self-righteous, screwed-up, pot-smoking single mother and history professor. What's not to like? And it doesn't hurt Lahti's cause among those who are roughly in her age group—she is fifty-four—and may be feeling, as time goes by, a sense of increasing sexual invisibility, that she is one of the few women in Hollywood who appear not to have had plastic surgery and thrown away their lived-in good looks. She's not stainless steel; she's sterling silver. True, sterling tarnishes—but that's how you know it's real, darlin'.

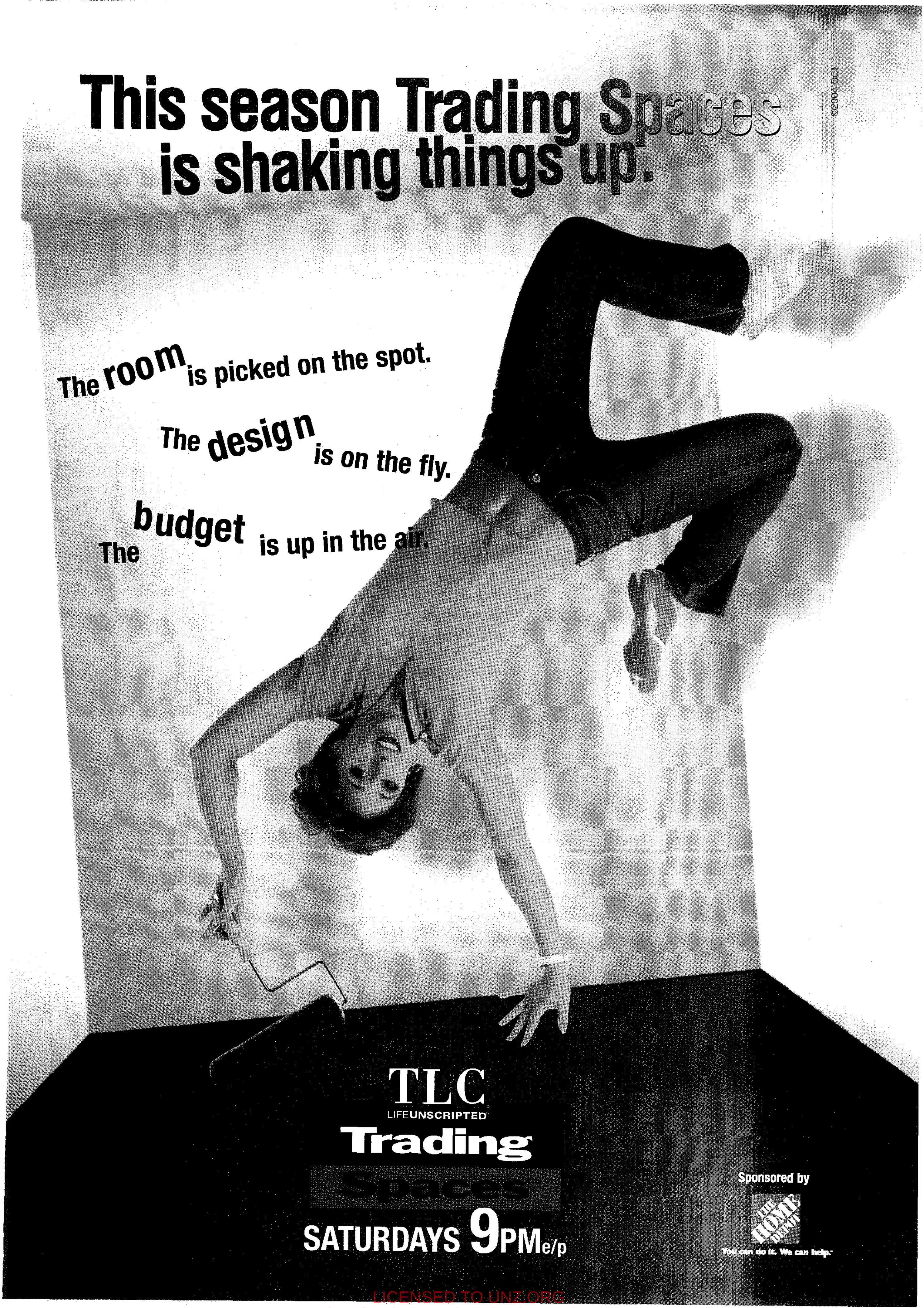

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED S
Fotheringham

The WB's new family drama elects a future President of the United States.

"Jack & Bobby" has been described as a hybrid of "The Wonder Years" and "The West Wing," which is not exactly right but not entirely off base, either. It combines family drama with political themes, and two of its executive producers are high achievers in those areas: Thomas Schlamme, who was an executive producer of "The West Wing" (and has been Lahti's husband since 1983), and Greg Berlanti, who has already done two tours of duty on the WB, as a "Dawson's Creek" writer and producer and as the creator of the savory single-parent drama "Everwood." (Schlamme and Berlanti give the writer and producer Vanessa Taylor, whose mother is a professor, credit for making Lahti's character the woman she is.) By now, five episodes into the series, viewers know the brothers' fate: it is Jack (Matt Long), the older one—he is sixteen in the show—who will die, and the thirteen-year-old Bobby (Logan Lerman) who will become President McCallister, the leader of the free world. This information was disclosed at the end of the first episode, and you could not, at any point during the hour, have guessed the destiny of either brother, but the tease wasn't annoying—it highlighted the crisscrossing threads of determinism and arbitrariness that make up people's lives. At times, you thought Jack was the one: he's a runner with discipline and drive, he watches the History Channel, and he's popular at school. At others, it seemed likely to be Bobby, who is more curious and open than Jack, and more willing to do the uncool thing. (At school, he circulates a petition to start a Space Club.) Also in the first episode, we, and Bobby, found out that the boys' mother, Grace (Lahti), while working at the student union after graduate school, fell in love with a busboy from Mexico named Juan Roberto, and that he—not a famous and now dead archeologist, as Bobby had always been told—is the absent father of her children: hence their names. There are a few plot points in "Jack & Bobby" that are too neat, and this bit of news ranks high among them; given what we have already seen of Grace's hard-charging, academically oriented personality, it doesn't ring true—you can imagine her having, maybe through a birth-control malfunction, one child, but not two, with a busboy, at which point *she* would jettison *him*.

The series' storytelling device is unusual: the show flips back and forth between the present and 2049, the year that Bobby, a two-termer, winds up his Presidency. We never see the older Bobby, and in fact all we see of 2049 comes to us through "interviews" with the people in Bobby's political and personal life—who are filmed with just their heads against a

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM



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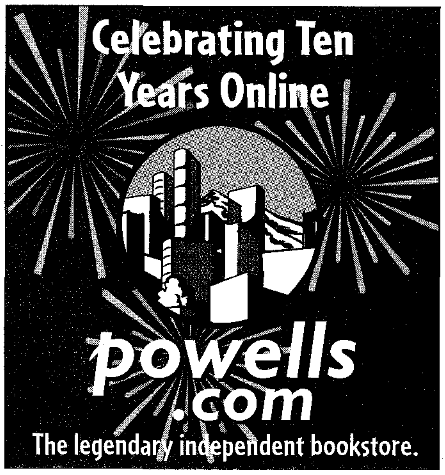
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plain background, as in a very dignified PBS biography. We are shown the candidates he defeated in 2040, senior members of his White House staff, and his wife (who may, by now, be a widow—the eulogistic tone of the interviewees and the fact that they all speak in the past tense suggest that Bobby has died recently, but that possibility is not confirmed). We find out several tantalizing things about the future, often in throwaway lines that nevertheless make us sit up: a passing mention is made of the "two former Hollywood actors" who have served as President, and one former President, in his interview, recalls his son's dying "on the border" in "the War of the Americas." There has also been a black President and a female Vice-President, but the show is clever enough—and optimistic enough—not to refer to these developments directly, thereby implying that in forty-five years people will simply take them for granted.

The main purpose of the time-jumping device (beyond providing reassurance that the United States will still be around in 2049—*phew*) is, of course, to make connections between Bobby's boyhood and the man he turned out to be. Some have to do with the makeup of his character. At a synagogue, where he is helping a friend study for his bar mitzvah, his questions about religion—if his mother is "nothing" and the father he never had was Catholic, what and who is he?—touch the rabbi, who provides the first sympathetic, paternal ear the boy has had when it comes to spiritual concerns. As an adult, in addition to becoming a congressman and the governor of Missouri, we learn, he became a minister, but, as his senior counsel tells us, "He would say about those who would use God's name to achieve their own political ends, 'We may have our faith in common, but I certainly hope that's all.' " (To keep things from being too party-line liberal, Bobby has been made a Republican—but one so left-leaning that his own party tries to destroy him.)

"Jack & Bobby" is most emotionally effective when the lines that are drawn between Bobby's boyhood and his adulthood meander through unexpected oxbows. (Steven A. Cohen, who had the original idea for the series, and is a producer, was Hillary Clinton's deputy communications director while she was the First Lady, and he accompanied President Clinton to his boyhood home of Hope, Arkansas, several times.) In one scene, Bobby, who is chagrined by his mother's pot habit, comes home from school to find Grace, stoned again, banging on about how she and the boys used to make cookies and listen to John Hiatt's "Have a Little Faith in Me." Enraged and disappointed, he runs out of the house. Later in the show, in a speech to incoming freshmen at the college, Grace talks about the importance of not being afraid to fail, and (temporarily) redeems herself in Bobby's eyes. Cut to 2049, and Dennis Morgenthal (well played by John Heard), one of Bobby's opponents in the 2040 election, talks about the moment when it became clear that Bobby would win and mentions that his campaign song was "Have a Little Faith in Me." This is much more than an *aha* moment for the viewer; we know the complicated and jumbled reasons that Bobby chose this song, but no one in the show knows—no one has seen what we've seen—and we are struck by this hard, and sad, evidence that no one is knowable, even people whose entire lives are part of the public record.

Though "Jack & Bobby" was recently extended for the rest of the season, its ratings could go even lower now that ABC's "Desperate Housewives," a slick satire of suburban life, which runs at the same time, has started: its première got the highest ratings for a new show so far this fall. The family-drama aspect of "Jack & Bobby"—the brothers' struggles with growing up, with each other, and with their loud-living, imperfect mother—fits in with the WB profile, but the historical sweep and depth provided by the scenes set in the future may seem tedious to younger viewers, and even to the slightly older ones whom the WB is trying to reach with this show. I don't care. I may be beyond the far end of the demographic that the WB (which, in my house, often stands for Woman Blubbering) is shooting for, and the network's advertisers might be horrified to learn that someone with multifocal lenses is watching "Jack & Bobby" (even though that makes no sense—I mean, I *do* have more money to spend on consumer goods than the average eighteen-year-old, I *think*), but, at least until this season is over, there's nothing they can do to stop me. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

TRUE VIEWS

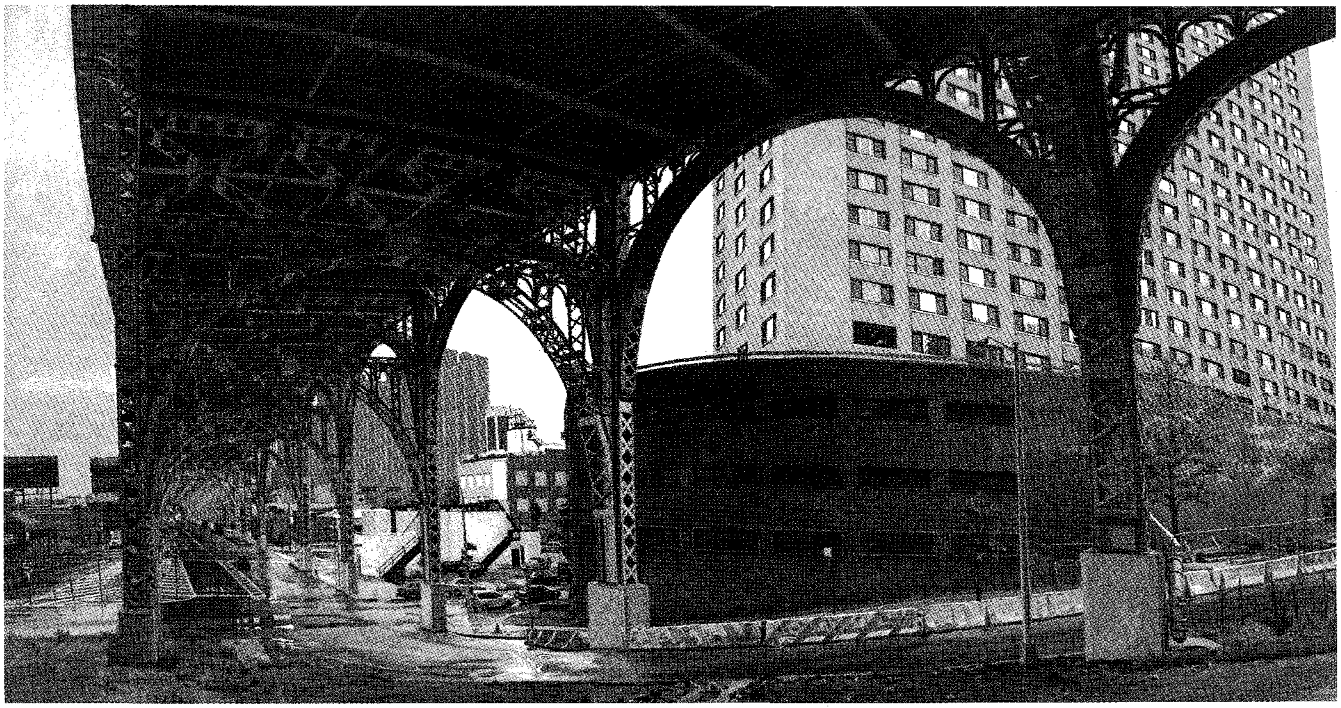
Rackstraw Downes's realism.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Rackstraw Downes, the veteran painter of landscapes and urban places, is a realist esteemed by people, including me, who normally have scant use for realism in art. His current show, of work from 1999 to 2004, at the new Betty Cuningham Gallery, is powerful in quiet, stubborn ways. The subjects include a viaduct in Harlem, a flood-monitoring station on the Rio Grande, a Texas desert, electrical substations in that desert, and metal ductwork in a large, dark attic. The look of the pictures, most of them panoramas, is luminous but taciturn: just the facts. Their surfaces are fine crusts of dry, oil-starved pigment, applied in sober little strokes and patches. The tonality is so uniform that the color, though extremely varied, turns almost monochrome in memory. "I want to paint exactly the way something is," Downes said to me recently. "If that means dulling down the green, then dull it down. Find the beauty in that." The pressure of scrutiny in his pictures yields a revelation not only of how the world looks but of how the eye—unaided by photography, which Downes pointedly never uses—toils to behold it.

Downes is commonly associated with a tradition of sophisticated representational painting in New York—ranging from Alex Katz's tableaux of cool urbanites to Jane Freilicher's rumpled communions with buildings and flowers—that emerged in the nineteen-fifties, partly in opposition to Clement Greenberg's pronouncement that only abstraction could count in new art. Its progenitors included the painter and critic Fairfield Porter and the photographer and painter Rudy Burckhardt. Downes (who edited an invaluable book of Porter's writings, "Art in Its Own Terms," in 1979) came to the coterie as an apostate abstractionist in the late sixties. He stands out in it for his radical invigoration of the most slippery of aesthetic terms: realism.

Philosophically, "realism" is the doctrine that things exist independent of our perceptions of them. In art, it names any effort to square perception with what is perceived—a project long ceded, in modern times, to photography. There is an existentialist, not to say quixotic, flavor to Downes's insistence on realizing the real by hand. Such is the case with his five-canvas study of the Rio Grande flood-monitoring station, an accumulation of views of an antennaed metal shack above a tire-tracked floodplain, red aerial markers on an overhead cable that stretches to a distant bluff, prickly brush, sun-soaked concrete, umber shadows, and burning blue sky. The result is a sense of place overwhelming in its very banality. Downes likes jam-ups of culture and nature, where practical human uses overlap with indifferent geology and shaggy flora—he is the bard of weeds.


"The Cotton Club from Under the Viaduct at Riverside Drive and St. Clair Place" (2003).

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Downes is English-born but antitheatrical in ways that recall no classic English painter except the obsessively empirical John Constable. (Downes's parents were sometime actors, and he grew up loving them but resenting their histrionics.) He credits a passion for American jazz for his emigration at the age of seventeen, in 1957, on a scholarship to Hotchkiss. He went to Yale, again with a scholarship, on the strength of its association with Josef Albers, a high priest of geometric abstraction. Downes studied with Alex Katz but stayed loyal to ge-

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ometry until, after graduation, living in Maine, he got stuck and started drawing outdoors "to challenge my limited, frozen abilities." With help from new colleagues, notably the Maine landscapist Neil Welliver, he mastered techniques of plein-air painting. His gallery début in New York, in 1972, offended avant-gardists and, to his dismay, was a huge hit with genteel collectors who thrilled to sightings in his work, he said, of "precious moo-cows 'round the pondy-wondy." Gradual recognition of his originality and rigor led to residencies, in recent years, at Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation, in Marfa, Texas. His affinity with the militant austerity of that Shangri-la of minimalism is apparent, in the present show, in renditions of galvanized-steel ductwork that suggest found Judd sculptures.

While painting a panorama, Downes moves his canvas to face each part of a wraparound view. Receding lines converge in all directions, including upward. Only with effort may a viewer come to recognize that the seeming distortions in the work—curving fence lines, tilting skyscrapers, ballooning space—are the raw data of eyesight, which our brains correct. What we see and what we think we see are not the same. Downes paints the former. His one major element of artifice is an elision of time—he spends weeks, even months, on a painting, always on site.

The air is groggy with summer heat in Downes's first, serendipitous history painting, "Young Trees Round an Elliptical Lawn, Liberty State Park," which he made in the summer of 2001, and which incorporates a detail—a faint flock of helicopters—that he saw on July 10th. The scene is a forlorn vastness of yellow-green grass, purplish-gray pavement, regimented saplings, and whitish sky. The twin towers stand in a blue-gray, faraway skyline. The choppers were bearing George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton, George Pataki, and Charles Schumer from a ceremony at Ellis Island. They would soon return, to a maimed city, in a changed world. Downes's evocation of incipient tragedy is as breathtaking, in its indirect way, as the inconspicuous fall of Icarus, by Breughel, which inspired W. H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts." In our thoughts, disasters are framed and centered, but even the most spectacular of them only inflect the gigantic, droning ordinariness of space and time. That's reality. ♦

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THE THEATRE

THE LAUGHING CURE

Black comedy and blackface in two Off Broadway shows.

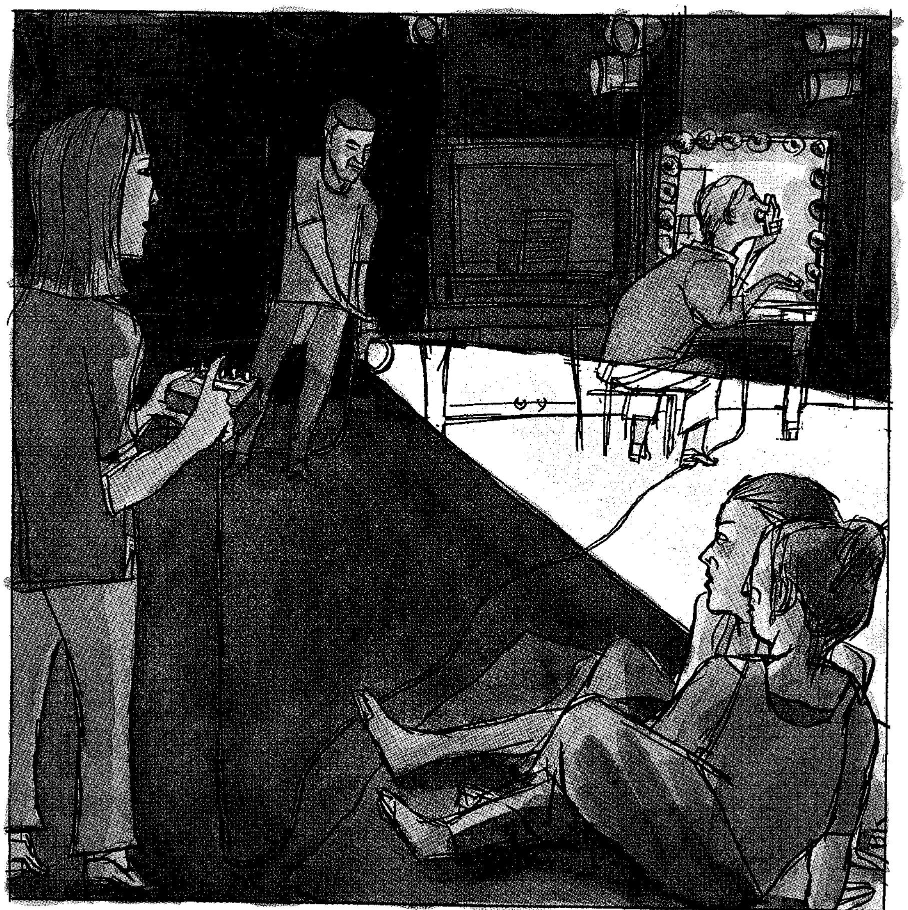
BY JOHN LAHR

In "The Four Quartets," T. S. Eliot, who was not renowned for spontaneous displays of humor, explained a lot about comedy. "Human kind cannot bear very much reality," he wrote. Jokes are the soul's analgesic: they defy gravity—which is to say, anything that weighs us down—and they detach us from grief. When we say that laughter "lifts our spirits," we mean that it works as a sort of stage-managed resurrection—we are somehow taken out of ourselves, and carried back into the moment. In that instant, life becomes luminous again.

This process is part of the strategy and the argument of Bryony Lavery's deft and compelling "Last Easter" (at the Lucille Lortel). The play begins with a joke, disguised as explanation to the audience: "We're trying to cheer each other up because . . . O.K. . . . June . . . the bitch . . . June's had breast cancer," a swishy, "deeply shallow" singer and female impersonator called Gash (the superb Jeffrey Carlson), who specializes in high camp, says of the play's central character, a dying lighting designer (Veanne Cox). Lavery's play "Frozen" was nominated for a Tony Award last year, but the playwright got into trouble for failing to acknowledge her borrowings. Here she is more scrupulous about listing the eclectic sources from which she has filched her fun: Bill Clinton, the *Daily Mirror*, and the late English jokemeister Bob Monkhouse, among others. Although Lavery's jokes may not be original, the use to which she puts them is. She writes in short strokes of overlapping observation—an impressionistic narrative style that relies on timing and intonation and requires a special alertness from the generally excellent ensemble. Under the director Doug Hughes's confident hand, exhilaration and desperation play off each other in scintillating counterpoint. "This sick tired bald twig thing in a polystyrene wig you can't even laugh at," Gash calls June, to their mutual friend Leah (the droll Clea Lewis), a propmaker. "She said you could laugh at it!" Leah replies. "Permission!" Gash says. "How's that fun?"

Transgression is the name of the comedy game; in "Last Easter," humor seduces the audience into facing the unpalatable issues of death, euthanasia, and the miraculous. We are smug about life; the little miracles of touch, taste, breath, movement are taken for granted, until, inevitably, as June says, "shit happens." For a brief moment at the beginning of the play, before the doctors pronounce her inoperable, June glimpses life's blessing. She sits looking at the red tulips on her kitchen table and smoking a cigarette—"It's her extreme sport," Gash says—and she feels happy. "The happiness is something to do with . . . the air, the sun, the everything," she says. But, once her diagnosis is known, she uses the word "miracle" only ironically: when praising the promiscuous Gash's ability to find company or describing her own terminal condition. As expertly played by Cox, June is a stoic intelligence, who is increasingly wrapped in the solitude of her sorrow. When Gash and Leah hatch a plan to take her to Lourdes for a religious cure, she remarks, "They're going to take me to Lourdes and I'm to be miraculously cured of secondary cancer from which no one recovers, by a phenomenon celebrated by a religion I don't believe in without my knowing it." Nonetheless, she goes along.

For the trip, the trio is joined by a raucous fourth miracle worker, a bibulous actress named Joy (Florencia Lozano), who is haunted by the suicide of her former lover. Lavery has made her own trip to Lourdes, and she reports back entertainingly—on the shrine's loudspeakers, which hush the public (with the exception, evidently, of the Italians); the toilets marked "Femmes Malades" and "Hommes Malades"; the photographs of "the Cured." But the laughter in these



In "Last Easter," a group of theatricals looks at the funny side of death.

BEN KATCHOR

scenes only magnifies the friends' own fervent longing. They keep debunking the folly of the Lourdes faithful around them—"Fairy tales can come true, it can happen to you . . . if you're . . . if you believe," Gash sings—but each clearly harbors his own small hope. ("They all want a miracle, but it's each person's secret," the stage directions tell us.) As the friends push June's wheelchair out into the center of the Holy Pool, Gash can't resist sending up his own yearning for salvation. "We push her out," he says, "and . . . it's incredible, it's a miracle, it's happened . . . there's brand-new tires on the wheels of her chair!" Gash's performance is a sort of striptease of hope. He stands before us at the opening of Act II, in St. Bernadette drag, recounting in Lavery's telegraphic idiom June's last, urgent medical treatments: "Tests, pills, injections, skin grafts, machines, American know-how, care." He adds, "She's saved, she's saved, in the nick of time, the prognosis is reversed! . . . It's a miracle! . . . Just kidding." This persistent foolery creates its own chilling climate of spiritual absence and regret. Faith is no longer something lived but something remembered from the movies. "I've lost my faith just like Audrey Hepburn in 'A Nun's Story,'" Gash says to June. "You've lost your hope just like James Mason in 'A Star Is Born.'"

"There's no God, is there?" Gash asks June at one point. In its attempt to answer that question, "Last Easter" works as a kind of theatrical three-card monte, luring our attention in one direction while accomplishing, in its execution, something completely surprising. Every joke, every plea, every prayer of every character is aimed at the heavens. But God, the play suggests, is in other people. On Easter, a year after the trip to Lourdes, June's friends themselves become the agents of mercy: with a morphine cocktail, they release her from her pain. They expect punishment from the state; instead, they find leniency. "Drama-wise . . . big anticlimax," Gash says.

Once June is gone, the friends are left to keep her—and themselves—alive through humor. "Cliché alert," Gash says, as June rises from beyond the grave to bring news of her easeful death—and to announce that the body dies but the mind reaches no conclusions. As always, Lavery's jokes allow her to have it both ways, embracing both the negative and the positive. The friends still hanker, according to Joy, for "something amazing" to warm the cold universe and redeem it from meaninglessness. They find it, as always, in a joke. Gash tells the one about a woman who's dyslexic, agnostic, and insomniac. "She stays up all night wondering if there is a dog," he says.

In "White Chocolate" (directed by David Schweizer, at the Century Center for the Performing Arts), William Hamilton, whose cartoons on these pages have been exposing the folly of the upper orders for decades, turns his appetite for caprice on Brandon and Deborah Beale, two Park Avenue social climbers. By playing the opening five minutes of his farce in the dark, Hamilton breaks the first rule of comedy: it has to be seen to be believed. This proves both necessary and problematic, as, when the lights come up on the Beales' boudoir, we are shown that the privileged couple, formerly Caucasian, have turned black. Deborah (Lynn Whitfield) at first takes her tight-jawed husband for an interloper. She gets a gun from her bureau, pushes him up against the wall, and turns back to the mirror. "O.K., bitch, out here now!" she says. Then adds, "Oh, my God." She's aiming the gun at her own reflection.

Hamilton's high jinks are meant to laugh the notion of race off the stage. Judging by the guffaws coming from the audience, in the first part of the evening he succeeds. He clearly enjoys torturing his blue-blooded pair, and he takes special pleasure in mocking Brandon's venomous sister, Vivian Beale Somerset (Julie Halston), who is staying with the couple in order to attend a party at which Brandon is expected to be named the head of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Halston makes a particularly hilarious viper. She accounts for her relatives' sudden change of skin color by concluding that the evening's party is a masquerade; she arrives dressed in a maid's costume and in a sort of Krazy Kat blackface. Her scenes are worth the price of admission. Unfortunately, Hamilton's fun machine runs out of gas in the second act, which is all tell and no show. I look forward to his next play, by which time, I hope, he'll have gone to farce school and learned its golden rule: when you're skating on thin ice, safety lies in speed. ♦

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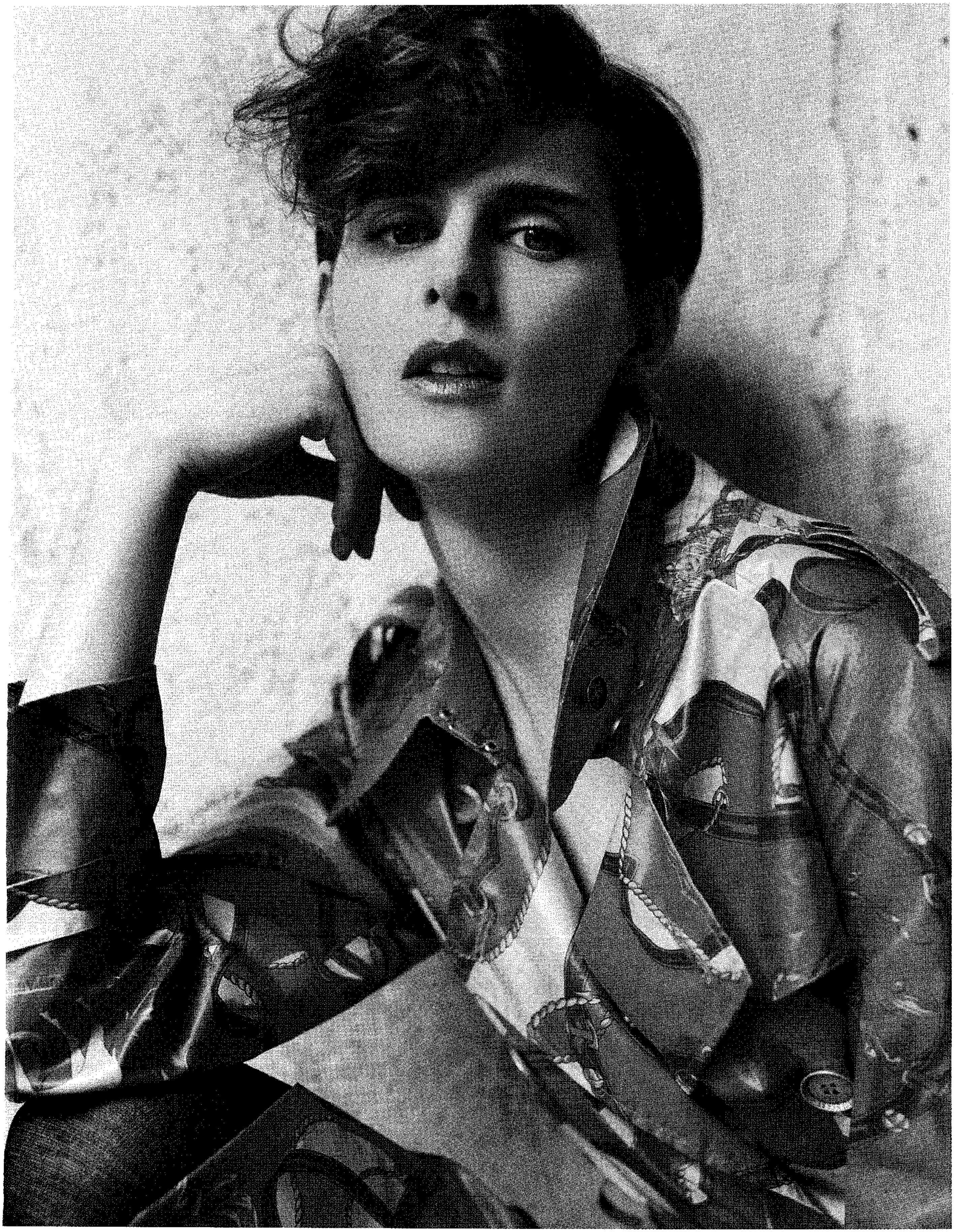

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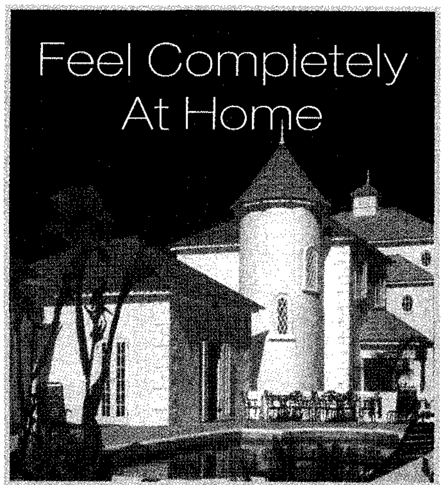

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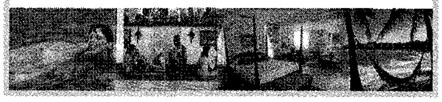

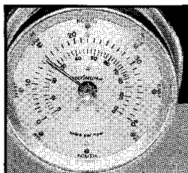

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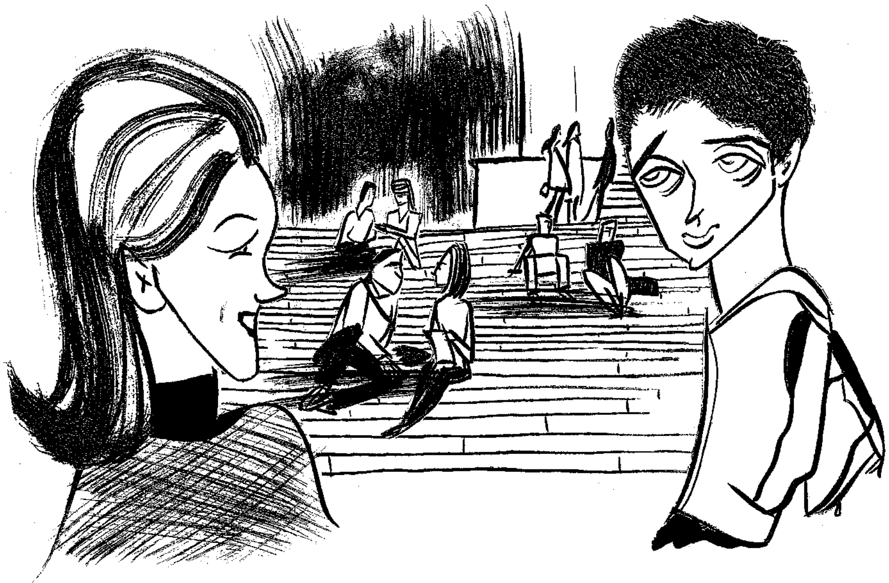
YOUNG MEN

“P.S.” and “Tarnation.”

BY ANTHONY LANE



Laura Linney plays an admissions director, and Topher Grace is a lucky applicant.

TOM BACHTELL

This is how you get into Columbia University. You get a call from the director of admissions, whom you greet with the words “Yyyyyyo, what’s crackin’?” The director’s name is Louise, so you call her first Louise and then, without invitation, Lou. She asks you to come for an interview. You agree, but you show up late, explaining, “I totally fucked up on the subway.” The director is wearing a low-cut summer dress. At the conclusion of the interview, you leave the building, but she hastens after you, summons you back, and invites you to her home for further discussion. She pours two glasses of wine and sits down next to you, at which point you observe, not without justification, that “I’m really digging this executive-recruitment thing.” You produce a contraceptive, which suggests that this turn of events is no surprise, and have sex on her couch. Finally, you depart, having graciously described the experience as “fucking awesome.” Sometime later, the director informs you that you have been accepted as a student at Columbia.

Now, personally, I can see nothing wrong with this procedure. Studies in recent years have begun to cast serious doubt upon the efficacy and reliability of the S.A.T.s, so any alternative set of criteria by which potential candidates can be fairly assessed is, of course, worthy of consideration. Nevertheless, I persist in wondering whether the practice of W.A.C., or wine-and-copulation, might, over the long term, run into a number of practical snags. For instance, it is just possible that some applicants might not, for whatever reason, wish to have sex on the day of their interview. Furthermore, given that opinions can differ quite sharply as to what does or does not constitute “fucking awesome” in the matter of sexual performance, it might prove necessary for the university to provide an independent referee, who can attend the performance and grade it accordingly; and referees cost money. Still, it’s gratifying to learn that Columbia is cleaving to its custom of academic innovation, and that it so generously plans to spread the word. That, at least, is the conclusion we must come to after viewing the film “P.S.,” to which the university presumably gave its blessing, and in which all

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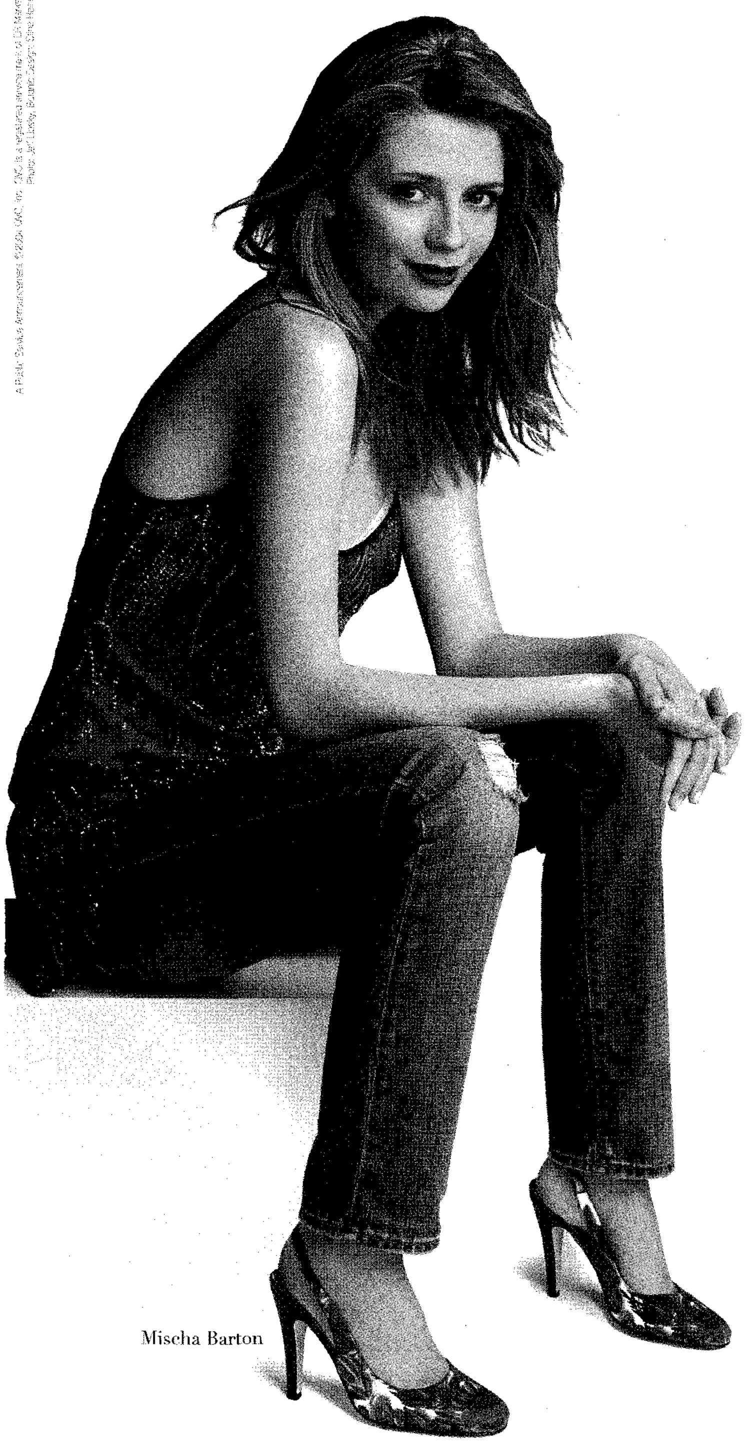

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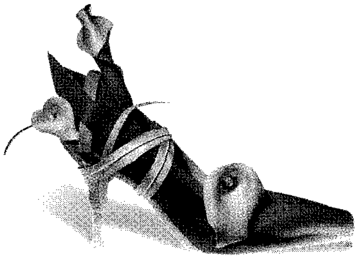

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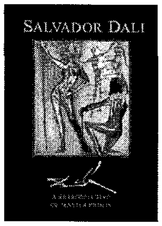

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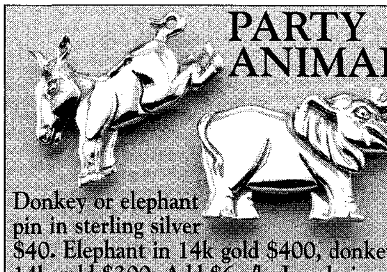

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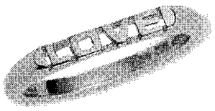

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the activities noted above occur. It's a sort of "Oleanna" without the hassle, and how it would be received if the genders of the two leads had been reversed I dread to think.

The film stars Laura Linney as Louise and Topher Grace as F. Scott Feinstadt, the student with the proper entry requirements. They make a neat double act: Linney is such a natural, round-the-clock worrier that her beauty seems indivisible from her frowns, whereas Grace has a wide, accepting smile and a voice like Joe Mantegna's. Other characters poke their noses into the action, though none for very long. There is Louise's mother (Lois Smith), piemaker, gardener, and sage. (If you are green-thumbed in the movies, you are automatically assumed to be in the flower of human wisdom. The same goes for anybody who works with wood.) There is Louise's brother, an ex-junkie named Sammy (Paul Rudd). And there is Louise's former husband, Peter (Gabriel Byrne), who also works at Columbia; at one point she finds him beside a large telescope, from which I deduce that he either teaches astrophysics or likes to peer into the distant dormitories of his female students. The second option is more likely, given that Peter has already told Louise that he suffers—and suffered throughout their marriage—from an addiction to sex. "It's a disease," he says. I'm sorry, but it's not. It is, in fact, a direct result of looking like Gabriel Byrne and being mobbed by nineteen-year-olds in crop tops who keep asking for help with their equations.

It was around here that "P.S." started to give me cause for concern. Recently, the director, Dylan Kidd, made his début with "Roger Dodger." Starring Campbell Scott, it was the tale of a womanizer on the slide, if that's not a tautology, and it was one of the two or three movies of last year that I actually recommended to friends. Hopes were high for the new film, but within minutes the distinction was clear: "Roger Dodger" was hard, and "P.S." is soft. There was something urgent and metallic in the former, with Scott's astounding monologues carving relentlessly onward like a snowplow, whereas "P.S." lurches and falters under the weight of its civilized fretting. Desire, in both cases, is far more discussed than acted upon, and the act itself is doomed to be joyless; but there was real joy in the venom and vehemence of "Roger Dodger," of a kind I hadn't witnessed since "Carnal Knowledge," whereas "P.S." feels of a piece with films like "The Hours" and "You Can Count On Me," in that, through its very sensitivity, it winds up offering an easy victory to the neurasthenic. Peter, who is at the confessional stage of a twelve-step addiction program, returns a few nights later and sits on the edge of Louise's bed, deep in mid-mope, with consoling shadows veiling him like a figure from Edward Hopper. The image is steeped in knowledge, of the rueful variety, but where did the carnality go?

Some relief is offered by Missy (Marcia Gay Harden), Louise's best friend, who lives out of town. For reasons that I couldn't fathom, she shows up and starts messing around with Louise's new romance, even luring the increasingly bewildered F. Scott back to her hotel for a drink. The twist is that Scott Feinstadt was also the name of a boy whom Louise and Missy both loved, and fought over, many years before, in high school; at best, that strikes me as a vaguely amusing coincidence, yet it appears to be the spark that sets Louise—and Missy, and the entire plot—on fire.

What's going on here? The film is based on the novel by Helen Schulman, who co-wrote the script with Kidd, and it suffers from the same hobbling that bedevils so many literary adaptations; namely, that what strikes a reader as a conceit of some delicacy will strike a moviegoer as clunking whimsy. "P.S." is rife with self-questioning, as befits any movie about the soul's constrictions in middle age, but the dilemmas are stated so baldly that they come across as peevish. "I'm offering myself to you—the real me," Peter says to Louise, and for once he is speaking spiritually. Later, Missy is asked how F. Scott made her feel when they first spoke, and she replies, "Like myself. The real me." I am not convinced that film is the ideal medium for such revelations of Platonic essence.

Despite all this, "P.S." is worth your time. Kidd nudges his fragile story along at a beguiling pace, and there is a beautiful scene in a restaurant, where F. Scott and Louise, the odd couple, canoodle beside a mirror, and their lamp-lit sweet nothings turn into a real something—a row of endlessly reflected kisses. Best of all, there's Topher Grace, who sounds the perfect note of skepticism when, as the kid who sees things more sanely and cloudlessly than the myopic adults around him, he plucks up courage to remonstrate with Louise. "Some guy broke your heart, and I get that—that's traumatic," he tells her, adding, "but that happens to everybody. It's called"—he pauses—"*high school*." That is what I wanted to hear all along, and what I hope we get plenty more of from Dylan Kidd: Roger Dodger Redux.

From the moment, in the opening minutes of "Tarnation," when somebody searches on Google for the words "lithium overdose," you know that you're in for a rough ride. The film is a documentary, directed by Jonathan Caouette, starring Jonathan Caouette, and based on the life of Jonathan Caouette. It is not an enviable life. He was born in Texas, in 1972, to a troubled woman named Renee, a former child model. At the age of twelve, playing on a roof, she had slipped. Destabilized by the fall, she underwent electric-shock treatment and frequent hospitalization. She later married a man who abused her and left her, and the effects of all this were handed down to Jonathan like a curse.

The movie is a daunting blend of head trip, cinéma vérité, music video, and auto-therapy. In his teens, Caouette was introduced to underground film by friends in the Houston gay scene, and "Tarnation" may point toward a new age for underground auteurs, who, with a little help from their iMacs, can crawl upward into the sunlight with digital splicings of their old home movies and bad dreams. The executive producer is Gus Van Sant, but the presiding genius is Andy Warhol, although the jagged acceleration of the editing—we get the rush of existence, never the drag—might have struck even Warhol as hair-raising. The first half of "Tarnation" is almost unwatchably sad, as Jonathan and Renee keep step in their Job-like afflictions (Renee sought a new life in Chicago but was raped by a stranger in front of Jonathan, who was then placed in foster care and maltreated), and the tales of splintered hope, with "Wichita Lineman" playing over them, may drive some viewers to tears. Further along, however, the picture is preyed upon, as is every memoir, by the threat of the narcissistic, and as the son points the camera at his mother in the New York of 2000, and presses her for details of her marriage, you fear a fresh cycle of harm. "We can *talk*, Jon," she cries, in obvious distress. "We don't need it on film." There is an art, as hard as any other, in knowing when art has to stop. ♦

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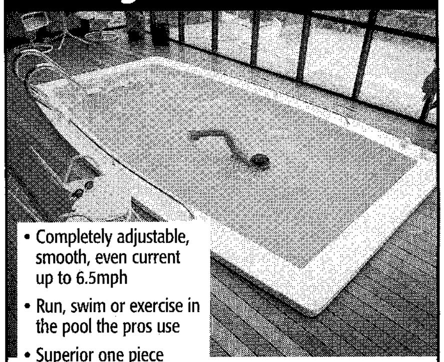

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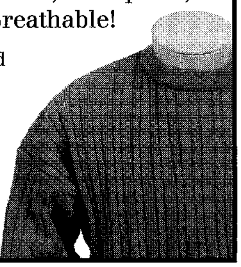

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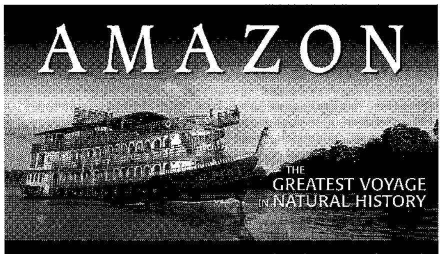

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

CAMPAIGN 2004: THE QUIZ

Which candidate did what?

1. Howard Dean.
2. John Edwards.
3. John Kerry.
4. Wesley Clark.
5. Joseph Lieberman.

(a) Issued a press release announcing his endorsement by Hootie and the Blowfish.

(b) Called out to his press secretary, "Mary, help!," when asked how he would have voted on the Iraq war.

(c) Allowed someone to pour a milkshake into a glass balanced on his head.

(d) Referred to a Secret Service agent who skied into him and knocked him down as a "son of a bitch."

(e) Touted his fifth-place finish in the New Hampshire primary as "a three-way split decision for third place."

6. What was the Bush adviser Mark McKinnon referring to when he said, "You don't get gifts like that very often"?

(a) Teresa Heinz Kerry's remark, referring to hurricane-relief priorities, "Clothing is wonderful, but let them go naked for a while, at least the kids."

(b) John Kerry's explanation of the history of his votes on "the eighty-seven billion dollars."

(c) The statement by an executive at Diebold, one of the nation's leading makers of touch-screen voting machines, that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the President."

(d) The buttons distributed at the Republican Convention that read, "I don't believe the New York Times."

7. Who is Morton Blackwell?

(a) The New Jersey policeman who handcuffed and arrested the mother of a soldier killed in Iraq because she showed up at a rally attended by Laura Bush wearing a T-shirt that read, "President Bush You Killed My Son."

(b) The associate of Karl Rove who put up most of the money for the Swift-boat ads.

(c) The Ohio University math professor who was forced by security officials to take off his Kerry-Edwards T-shirt at a rally for George W. Bush.

(d) The Virginia delegate to the Republican Convention who handed out Purple Heart-emblazoned Band-Aids, mocking John Kerry's service in Vietnam.

8. In a video that ran on MTV's "Rock the Vote" Web site, who said, "I don't care what the other candidates say, I don't think OutKast is really breakin' up. Andre 3000 and Big Boi just cut solo records, that's all"?

(a) Wesley Clark.

(b) Al Sharpton.

(c) Richard Gephardt.

(d) Carol Moseley Braun.

9. Which event did not occur?

(a) Jenna Bush got stuck in an elevator at a night club, then pried the door open with a chopstick and had a tequila.

(b) Wesley Clark approached a New Hampshire preschooler who seemed to be daydreaming at the art table, pushed the child's chair in, and said, "Aren't you supposed to be coloring? Isn't that the project right now?"

(c) Bushels of paper confetti bearing the minuscule faces of the Bushes and the Cheneys were dropped from the rafters at the Republican Convention.

(d) Ralph Nader apologized to the families of soldiers killed or wounded in Iraq.

Match the nonsense word with its definition.

10. "Joementum."
11. "Gobush."
12. "Moolah" (rhymes with "Boola").
13. "Tofurkey."

(a) The surname of Joseph Lieberman's director of communications.

(b) A meat substitute made in a Hood River, Oregon, factory visited by Dennis Kucinich, a vegan.

(c) The way George W. Bush pronounced the word for "Muslim cleric" at the first debate.

(d) What Joseph Lieberman told CNN that his campaign was gaining.

14. True or false: With John Kerry sitting onstage at the "Tonight Show," Triumph the Insult Comic Dog told Jay Leno, "Jay, the poop I made in your dressing room has more heat than John Kerry."

15. Which of the following is an actual quote from Joseph Lieberman?

(a) "What we need most urgently is a sense of urgency."

(b) "What we need most immediately is a sense of immediacy."

(c) "What we need most desperately is a sense of desperation."

(d) "What we need most is a sense of humor."

16. Who said it? "If I came to you with twenty-five of your closest friends carrying a black box with red buttons on it and said, 'We have all looked for the best person to take care of this box, and we've decided that the only one who can protect it is you—if anything happens to it, if you lose it, the entire planet blows up,' most of us, I mean, two hundred and eighty million of us, would say, 'No! I don't want the goddam box anywhere near me! Take it away!' Yet every four years a bunch of seven or eight guys come out screaming, 'Give me the fuckin' box!' "

(a) Comedian Bill Maher.

(b) MSNBC's Ron Reagan.

(c) Political consultant Joe Trippi.

(d) Lynne Cheney.

Answers:
(1) c, (2) a, (3) d, (4) b, (5) e, (6) b, (7) d,
(8) a, (9) d, (10) d, (11) a, (12) c, (13) b,
(14) True, (15) b, (16) c.

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